

# EDUCATION REPORTER

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## Dad Arrested at Common Core Forum

The father of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-grader and a 6<sup>th</sup>-grader who attend Howard County schools in Maryland was arrested in September for speaking out against Common Core at a state Department of Education meeting. While trying to ask questions, Robert Small, a research manager for the Department of Veteran Affairs, was confronted by an off-duty police officer hired to provide security. Video shows the



confrontation that results in Small being forcibly escorted from a podium. Small is charged with second-degree assault of a police officer, which can lead to a \$2,500 fine and ten years in prison. He was also charged with “disturbing a school operation,” which carries a fine of \$2,500 and up to six months in jail.

The purpose of the meeting was to explain Common Core standards being implemented in Maryland schools. The format allowed parents to submit written questions. The questions were then read aloud by Baltimore County School Superintendent Dallas Dance with answers provided by a panel. But parents noticed that Dance had changed the wording of the questions they had submitted, which resulted in answers that were not addressing parents’ concerns.

The State Attorney decided to dismiss charges against Mr. Small.

Small said that he understood that the police officer was just doing his job and that his problem is with school officials who refuse to address parents’ Common Core questions. Mr. Small stated:

Look, I am being manhandled and shut down because I asked inconvenient questions. Why won’t they allow an open forum where there can be a debate? We are told to sit there and be lectured to about how great Common Core is.

EAG News commented, “The bureaucrats can’t withstand a simple challenge from a taxpaying citizen without having the (very polite) critic literally hauled off in handcuffs.”

## Duncan Threatens California Over Common Core

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has threatened to cut off federal education funds to California if state officials don’t administer Common Core testing exactly as he wishes. Although Common Core is allegedly state led and left up to the states to run, evidence and federal government interference prove this is far from the truth. Duncan wants to overrule the decision of the California state legislature. States actually have limited control when it comes to Common Core, as proven by the California experience.

California legislators passed a law, AB484, which ditches the current state standardized tests and temporarily replaces them with a limited standardized test based on Common Core standards. Common Core tests require a computer for each student, so California will administer the new test only where there exists the computer capacity for students to take the test.

Arne Duncan and the Department of Education will not allow this decision

by the state. Duncan issued a statement saying, “A request from California to not measure the achievement of millions of students this year is not something we could approve in good conscience.”

Duncan’s statement also issued a threat:

If California moves forward with a plan that fails to assess all its students, as required by federal law [NCLB], the department will be forced to take action, which could include withholding funds from the state.

Editors of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, “California Supt. [of Education] Tom Torlakson says the state will not back down, even though Duncan is threatening to withhold some or all of the approximately \$1.5 billion it receives each year in federal Title I funds.” (9-16-13)

Supt. Torlakson explained:

This legislation will continue to be guided by what’s right for California’s children.... We won’t reach [our goals for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning] by continuing to look in the rear-view mirror with outdated tests, no matter how it sits with officials in Washington.

Forty states have received waivers allowing them to avoid penalties for not complying with No Child

Left Behind [NCLB] requirements. Although California’s need is different

from what other states have asked for from the federal government, California feels justified in its decision to curtail outdated testing and delay full implementation of Common Core due to lack of computers and because tests are not complete.

*Education Week* predicts there will be no easy solution to the California confrontation:

The [Obama] administration is hoping that Congress will pass a rewritten No Child Left Behind Act, but there already are hostile rumblings that the law — and Common Core in particular — are federal strong-arming of the states’ authority over education. (9-10-13)

### The State of Common Core in Florida

On Sept. 23, Gov. Rick Scott ordered Florida education officials to withdraw from the PARCC Common Core testing consortium and to hold at least three public hearings on Common Core. Scott wrote in a letter to Arne Duncan, “The federal government has no constitutional authority to involve itself in the state-level decisions on academic standards and assessments.” Although the governor’s action halts the current track of PARCC testing, it does not prevent that same consortium from competing to become the state’s testing choice in the future. (*Miami Herald*, 9-23-13)

Florida will need to decide swiftly what testing they will use to replace former state tests — otherwise they may find themselves in the same boat as California, with the federal government threatening to withhold education funding.

### Common Core Fears in New Hampshire

Editors of the *New Hampshire Union Leader* report that the Manchester school board recently postponed a scheduled meeting about Common Core standards because the board could not yet ascertain “whether the school district would lose \$77 million in state and federal aid if it rejected the standards.” The editorial states that “more and more parents are skeptical because there is no satisfying answer to even the most basic questions about Com-

(See *Duncan Threatens CA*, page 4)

## Teacher Training Falls Short

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has issued a report on more than 1,100 teacher preparation programs in the nation. In conjunction with *U.S. News and World Report*, the study found that mediocrity is the norm in teacher training. Some fault the methodology and focus of the NCTQ review, but even critics of this particular survey can find fault with teacher training.

### NCTQ Results

“NCTQ used course requirements, syllabi, employer surveys, and detailed student-teaching contracts, among other documents, to score undergraduate and graduate teaching preparation programs. . . . It then assigned an overall program rating on a scale of zero to four stars, four being the highest.” (*U.S. News and World Report*, 6-18-13) Only four universities received the highest ranking of four stars: Vanderbilt, Furman, Ohio State, and Lipscomb. No elementary education program earned a four-star rating.

Over half of the programs, 700, ranked two stars or fewer, which “connote[s], at best, mediocrity.” Education programs at 162 universities received no stars, “meaning they fail to provide ‘even minimal training.’”

The editor of *U.S. News and World Report* wrote:

Teacher programs are accepting many unqualified students and then failing to educate them in the best methods of teaching reading, math and other subjects. They are not training them in how to manage a classroom, or

having them student-teach with well-qualified teachers.

RealClearPolicy.com reviewed the report and stated:

Nearly 75% of elementary-school teacher programs fail to teach proven methods of reading instruction.

Instead, education schools of-ten counsel teacher candidates to develop their ‘own unique approach’ to teaching reading — even though proven methods can reduce the proportion of students whose skills remain at substandard levels from 30% to 10%. (7-1-13)

One of the criteria that NCTQ used to judge schools of education was how well they were teaching future teachers to align with Common Core. This may be a questionable criterion. It is quite possible that the schools didn’t even know Common Core standards were coming and were taken just as off-guard as parents and most state legislators.

Critics of the survey also mention that the report should have included on-site visits to the education programs.

### More Evidence of Mediocrity

In 2009, Arthur Levine, the former president of Columbia Teachers College, told National Public Radio, “Education schools have, in many cases, become irrelevant, and often of very low quality.” He studied the “crisis” in classroom teacher training and found that “senior professors don’t participate in schools,” and that some teacher colleges “place their students

(See *Teacher Training*, page 4)



## EDUCATION BRIEFS

The NEA is attempting to spin support of Common Core by 26% of its members as “strong support” among teachers. A National Education Association (NEA) teachers union poll of 1,200 members in July found that 50% of members polled only support Common Core standards with “some reservations,” while 11% outright “oppose” Common Core implementation. An additional 13% claim they don’t know enough to form an opinion. (*NEA Today*, 9-12-13)

A student at Modesto Junior College (MJC) in California states, “I was really stunned when they told me that I had to ask for permission to pass out Constitutions on campus.” Robert Van Tuinen, a U.S. Army veteran, intended to give other students Constitution booklets he obtained from the Heritage Foundation on Constitution Day. Instead, campus police escorted him to a school administrator’s office. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) wrote a letter to MJC protesting the violation of students’ First Amendment rights. (EAGNews.org, 9-23-13)

Rev. James Tengatenga, a former Anglican bishop, was appointed dean of the Dartmouth College Tucker Foundation for Ethics, until the college president revoked the offer due to concerns that Tengatenga might not support homosexual marriage strongly enough. Although Tengatenga said he was committed to gay rights and has worked in support of them, possible past remarks about homosexuality caused the dean to fear “uncertainty and controversy,” and forced him to “call for a task force to clarify the [Tucker] foundation’s mission and structure.” (*Business Week*, 8-14-13)

The Black Alliance for Educational Options has joined with the Goldwater Institute, other organizations, and parents who are trying to stop the U.S. Justice Department from interfering in Louisiana’s school voucher program. The president of BAEO states, “There should be no reason whatsoever to deny children from low-income families a state scholarship that allows them to attend schools that might better meet their needs.”

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## D.C. School’s Past Excellence Collides With Sad Present

In August, Washington D.C. citizens and officials celebrated the opening of a \$122 million school that still bears the name of the historic Dunbar High School. Dunbar, the nation’s first public, academic high school for African Americans, was founded in 1870. “The new Dunbar, like many of the D.C. school buildings that have been rebuilt in recent years, boasts all manner of energy-efficient features, from geothermal heating to solar panels.” (*Washington Post*, 8-18-13) Classrooms also feature flat-screen televisions, interactive whiteboards and digital projectors. The 1977 building that formerly housed Dunbar and is now scheduled for demolition is a monument to a previously failed but widely prescribed education theory: classrooms without walls.

Even with all the bells and whistles, Dunbar High School is only a shadow of its former self. According to the *Washington Post*, “It produced generations of black leaders in fields such as law, education, science, engineering and civil rights.” But in 2012, Dunbar graduated only 59% of its students and registered a mediocre 20% proficiency in math and

29% in reading. (*Washington Times*, 8-25-13) Although 2012 enrollment was only 504 students, the new school was built to serve 1,100 students and there are questions concerning from where the additional students will come.

### Dunbar’s Proud Past

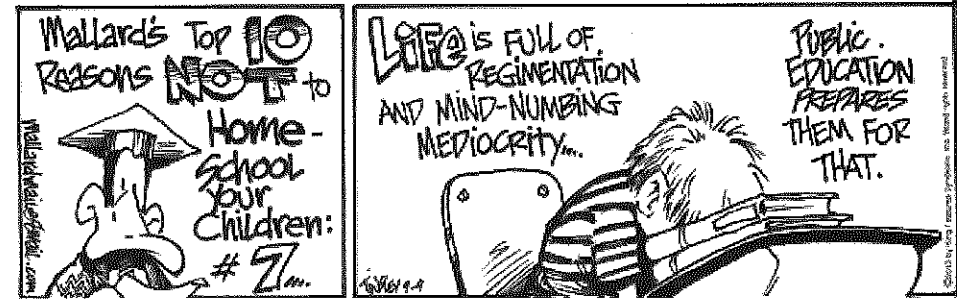
Thomas Sowell wrote in the Spring, 1974 issue of *The Public Interest*, “With all the voluminous outpourings on black educational pathology, there has been an almost total neglect of one of the most remarkable black educational success stories: Dunbar High School.” Dr. Sowell described the history of Dunbar from its basement location beginnings. In the auditorium of the 1916 building were found these words by the school’s namesake, poet Paul Laurence Dunbar: “Keep a-pluggin’ away, Perseverance still is king. . . .”

From 1870-1955 most of Dunbar’s graduates went on to college and were successful. Sowell offers several reasons for Dunbar’s success, notably the demand for academic excellence by the black community of Washington, D.C.

(See *D.C. School*, page 4)



## MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



## Gov. Bush Insults Concerned Parents

Former governor of Florida Jeb Bush appeared at the National Press Club in September. He was there to support Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, whose school voucher program is under attack from the federal government; the Justice Department has filed suit against it.

Reporters asked Gov. Bush about the Common Core revolt and Bush enthusiastically defended Common Core. It is ironic that federal intrusion in Louisiana troubles Bush, but the biggest federal intrusion into education in history does not.

Bush responded to critics of Common Core, “If you’re comfortable with mediocrity, fine. I’m not.” He continued, “There is a lot of heat right now. But the simple fact is, no one can defend the lower standards that we have across this country.” This ignores the fact that several states already had higher math and English language arts standards than those mandated by Common Core. Bush

continued, “We have abject failure across the board.” Another falsehood. States vary widely with some performing at much higher levels than others.

Bush attempted to paint the fight against Common Core as “political,” as opposed to a grassroots groundswell of parents and concerned citizens who have legitimate concerns about Common Core. Having educated themselves about the standards, they are concerned about the federal government’s role in promoting and enforcing the use of the standards and tests. The collection and sharing of individually identifiable student data and the lack of field testing of the standards before roll-out are two facets of Common Core that particularly trouble the parents and state legislators who are scrutinizing the standards.

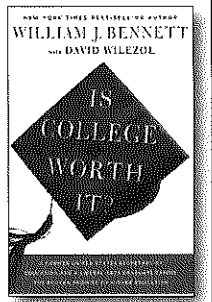
If Jeb Bush is a 2016 presidential hopeful, he has done himself a disservice by attacking individuals with sincere concerns about education and schoolchildren.



## Book of the Month



Is College Worth It?: A Former United States Secretary of Education and a Liberal Arts Graduate Expose the Broken Promise of Higher Education, William J. Bennett and David Wilezol, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2013, \$22.99



The authors of *Is College Worth It* say college should “come with a bright red warning label: ‘Warning! High risk of debt and unemployment.’” They cite a reputable 2012 survey finding that one in every five American households “owes student loan debt” and another study revealing that one in four borrowers are delinquent in paying off student loan debt. The authors conclude that, “America has overbought into the idea of college for everyone.”

The circumstances leading to Americans owing more than \$1 trillion in student loans include rising tuition costs fueled by freely available federal loans, unaccountable universities, an inflated perceived value of a college education, and political posturing. Something must be done before taxpayers face bailouts of students and colleges.

The authors suggest that return on investment should be a major consideration when determining which college to attend and what to study once enrolled. Citing reports that about 50% of the classes of 2011 and 2012 college graduates are underemployed, Bennett and Wilezol suggest that eyes must open to the truth about college.

Recognizing the “social stigma in not having a college degree,” observers hope there is an even larger stigma attached to being unemployed. While hundreds of thousands of skilled jobs go unfilled in America, failures in K-12 education turn out students unable to qualify for available skilled jobs. K-12 focus on “college for all” disheartens students who aren’t academically inclined, causing them to drop out of high school.

President Obama’s goal to increase degree attainment from 40% to 60% by 2020 is misguided. Students should study appropriate subjects in high school that allow them to find work upon graduation by implementing high school technical and apprenticeship programs.

The authors say that technological innovation will “radically change the nature of college in the future.” Students won’t need to graduate hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt when training for fulfilling employment is available online for a small cost.

The authors offer lists of schools, by category, that are worth attending even if debt is incurred.

They also say that the college experience may not be what parents wish for their children, stating that the “college campus is often a culturally permissive atmosphere of experimenting with drinking, drugs, partying, sex, and sometimes learning.”

# FOCUS: U.S. Secretary of Education to Editors: *Spin It Like Duncan*

*This article first appeared at Common Core: Education Without Representation on June 26, 2013 and is reprinted with permission.*

by Christel Lane Swasey

Arne Duncan, the U.S. Secretary of Education, is angry.

How dare Americans demand freedom from nationalized testing, nationalized standards, and data collection?

In his July 25, 2013 speech to the American Society of News Editors, Duncan said:

... This event has been an opportunity for federal leaders to talk about touchy subjects. For example, you asked President Kennedy to talk about the Bay of Pigs. So, thanks for having me here to talk about the Common Core State Standards. Academic standards used to be just a subject for after-school department meetings and late-night state board sessions. But now, they're a topic for dueling newspaper editorials. Why? That's because a new set of standards ... are under attack as a federal takeover of the schools. ... And your role in sorting out truth from nonsense is really important.

Indeed it is. Duncan admits:

... the federal government has nothing to do with curriculum. In fact, we're prohibited by law from creating or mandating curricula. So do the reporting. Ask the Common Core critics: Please identify a single lesson plan that the federal government created. ... Challenge them to produce evidence — because they won't find it. It simply doesn't exist."

Thank you, Secretary Duncan, for pointing this out.

## Federal Fingerprints

Federally created lesson plans don't exist because Duncan's department has worked so hard to get around the rules (*i.e.*, Constitution) and to make others do the wrongs that the Department then promotes and funds. The Department's associates (*i.e.* Linda Darling-Hammond, Bill Gates, David Coleman) worked with Achieve, Inc., with SBAC, with PARCC, with CCSSO, with NGA and others, to collectively produce the federally approved education "reform" agenda known as the Common Core Initiative. We know this.

But, thanks to Duncan for bringing up the term "lack of evidence." We'll get to that.

## Authority, Please

Duncan says: "The Department of Education is prohibited from creating or mandating curricula." YES!

Yet the Department has coerced and urged and cajoled and bribed American educators into joining the Common Core State Standards Initiative, has

funded tests upon which these standards are based, and has mandated that the testing consortia must share student-level data with the federal government concerning Common Core tests. Just see the Cooperative Agreement for oodles of power-grabbing evidence that uses the tests as vehicles.

Duncan says there is no evidence of a federal takeover using Common Core. Well, *almost*; there *is* no trace of a Department of Education fingerprint on the *writing* of the national standards, tests and curriculum. This is correct.

But there are massive, unmistakable Department of Education fingerprints *all over the promotion, marketing, funding and imposition* of the standards on states. These fingerprints are everywhere.

But the Department of Education has been very careful to use other groups as smokescreens for its "reforms" while the Department oversteps its authority. It was the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association (private lobbying organizations) that copyrighted the national standards, not the Department of Education.

It was David Coleman and his four friends who wrote the standards (with token feedback, largely ignored, from others). It was PARCC, SBAC, and AIR that created the common tests. It was Bill Gates (who partnered with Pearson) to write the lion's share of the American educational curriculum. And it is the Department of Education that put a 15% cap on top of those copyrighted standards that they say are state-led.

## Evidence, Please

Guess what? There is no evidence that Common Core will do anything it has claimed it can do. It does not exist — there's no empirical data, no pilot test, no study to verify claims that the standards will improve *diddley*.

We might each ask the reporters to ask for *that* evidence.

## Not Radical/Not Curriculum?

Duncan says that Common Core agenda is "neither radical nor a curriculum."

I beg to differ.

It is radical to create nationalized, (socialist-styled) testing and standards for schools in a land of liberty.

It is radical to shred the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) as the Department of Education has done, to demote "parental consent" from a privacy-protecting mandate to a "best practice" and to redefine protective terms to make them non-protective,

including "educational agency," "directory information," and "authorized representative."

It is radical to carefully work around the U.S. Constitution and the General Education Provisions Act's prohibitions against federal control of education. For just one example: in the "Cooperative Agreement" between the Department of Education and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) the federal government demands that states give conferences and phone updates, synchronicity of educational tests, triangulation of collected student-level data under the federal eye, and much more.

And Common Core is driving and creating a national curriculum, by encouraging governmental and corporate collusion to narrow and monopolize the educational purchases of the nation.

Duncan tries hard to persuade the American Editors Society in his speech to separate standards and curriculum, yet we all know that standards and curriculum go hand in hand — like frames shape homes, like hands shape gloves, like bones support flesh — standards direct curriculum.

As the main funder of Common Core, Bill Gates said in his July 21, 2009 speech at the Conference of State Legislatures:

Identifying common standards is just the starting point. We'll only know if this effort has succeeded when the curriculum and tests are aligned to these standards. ... When the tests are aligned to the Common standards, the curriculum will line up as well. ... for the first time, there will be a large, uniform base of customers.

## We're Not Collecting Student Data

Duncan also denies the existence of any federal push to collect personal student data. He says that critics "make even more outlandish claims. They say that the Common Core calls for federal collection of student data. For the record, we are not allowed to, and we won't."

No federal collection of student data? What a huge lie. Readers, please fact-check Secretary Duncan yourselves.

Aggregated student data has long been collected federally at the EDFacts Data Exchange. EDFacts states, "EDFacts is a U. S. Department of Education initiative to put performance data at the center of policy, management, and budget decisions for all K-12 educational programs. EDFacts centralizes performance data supplied by K-12 state education agencies." Although the information collected here is aggregated (grouped, not individualized) data, this will change because of the federal requests for more disaggregated (ungrouped, individualized) data.

Here are some federal sites where you can verify that the federal government is asking for more and more data points about each individual in our school systems. Search for:

Common Educational Data Standards — click on K12 student and find personally defining words like "identity," "parent," "incident," "contact," "authentication identity provider."

National Data Collection Model — under "core entities" you will find "teacher," "student," "school," "bus stop" and other identifying terms.

And Duncan is surely aware that the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which helped copyright and produce the standards, has a stated commitment to *disaggregation* of student data. Lastly. A simple common sense test.

If Arne Duncan were truly concerned about the quality of American schools, if he and his group cared about the education of children and not the controlling and surveillance of populations, then would they not have pushed for tested, piloted standards that would have used, for example, the sky-high standards of Massachusetts as a template, rather than circumventing all voters, circumventing academic tradition, and using this literature-diminishing, algorithm-slowness, cursive-slashing, informational text-pushing, unpiloted experiment called Common Core?

## A Vast Plot?

So am I suggesting that this is a diabolical scheme? Duncan himself almost suggested it. He quoted columnist Michael Gerson — President Bush's former speechwriter — who wrote that if the Common Core "is a conspiracy against limited government, it has somehow managed to recruit former governors Mitch Daniels and Jeb Bush, current governors Bobby Jindal and Chris Christie, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce." Gerson concluded, "A plot this vast is either diabolical or imaginary."

Diabolical is the right word.

While Duncan and his education reformers may truly believe that socialism/fascism may truly believe that socialism/fascism that this is to go, I don't. If anyone doubts that this is Duncan's direction, view Duncan's interview on the Charlie Rose show (3-11-2009), where he outlines his goals for the complete takeover of family life by schools. Schools are to be health clinics, parental education centers, are to be open six or seven days a week, and twelve hours or more per day, all year round, as day and night centers of civilization.

Folks, **it's not just standards.**

Not by a long shot.

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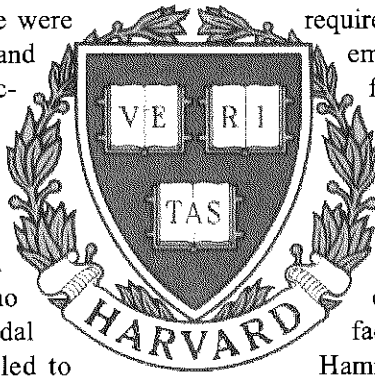
## Harvard Cheaters Return to School

Dozens of the 70 students who were tossed off campus for a year for cheating are returning to Harvard this fall. As many as 125 students were suspected of cheating on a final exam taken in the spring semester of 2012. Some were suspended from school and others faced other sanctions. Further complicating the controversy, administrators searched email accounts of some faculty members in an attempt to find out who leaked the cheating scandal to the press. This has led to an investigation into the privacy of Harvard University employees (*New York Times*, 9-26-13).

The scandal began when the professor for Government 1310, "Introduction to Congress," noticed that student answers on a take-home exam were alarmingly similar; they expressed the same misconceptions and even had the same typographical errors.

Students were allowed to use textbooks, their own class notes, and the internet in order to answer exam questions, but were expressly told not to discuss the test with fellow students. Some students decided to meet in groups and discuss the exam anyway, which resulted in varying degrees of cheating from the collaboration. Some teaching assistants met in small groups with students to help them understand the take-home test, which caused more confusion over collaboration.

Evelynn Hammonds, the dean of Harvard College who authorized searches of faculty emails to find potential leaks to



the media, resigned as dean in May. Hammonds claimed she authorized searches out of concern that names of cheating students would be published. She apologized for not following the school policy that

requires that an individual whose email is searched be notified of the search. Sixteen resident deans' email accounts were scrutinized. Hammonds could not recover from the secret search controversy, which created alarm among the faculty over privacy rights. Hammonds will take a sabbatical and "then return to Harvard to head up a new program looking at the role of race and gender in science and medicine." (Reuters, 5-28-13)

The scandal at Harvard calls into question policies about cheating and privacy. Some Harvard professors, afraid of repercussions, spoke to the news media anonymously. One said that Dr. Platt, professor of Govt. 1310, will not be promoted and most likely will leave Harvard in the near future.

There is talk of adopting an honor code at Harvard. Some say it is too late to "retrofit" an honor code because the Harvard culture is one of "academic excellence, certainly, but also material success and fame." (*The Atlantic Wire*, 4-8-13) Maybe if an honor code is instituted at Harvard, the oldest American college, that culture will eventually improve — to accommodate the view that material success and fame apart from honor are without value, and make paltry goals for any student embarking upon adult life.

## D.C. School (Continued from page 2)

Fancy physical facilities and generous financial support are dismissed by Sowell because Dunbar had neither. Sowell said of the achievements of Dunbar students:

The question of how it was done needs more exploration. It was not done by teaching ethnocentric 'relevance,' nor was it achieved with generous financing or even with adequate plant and equipment. What Dunbar had was a solid nucleus of parents, teachers, and principals who knew just what kind of education they wanted and how to produce it.

By the time Dr. Sowell wrote his 1974 *Public Interest* article, Dunbar had become a "ghetto school," with a principal who spent her days dealing with "discipline problems." What happened to the school's academic excellence?

Although no one would decry the 1954 D.C. court order to halt school segregation as anything but an admirable goal, no concern over what was being destroyed was allowed during the rush to integrate D.C. schools. The success of Dunbar high school students was not considered. No plan was organized so that the school would be both desegregated and remain academically excellent.

## D.C. Public Schools' Rocky Reputation

Dunbar High School's fall from excellence is symbolic of the struggles of D.C. schools in recent decades. The 2012 Nation's Report Card (NAEP) rankings show D.C. schools rank dead last among 52 jurisdictions. The rank includes both regular public and public charter schools in the nation's capital (43% of D.C. students attend charter schools). While the D.C. Public Schools website proudly declares, "DCPS students grew in every tested subject area from 2012 to 2013 in math (up 3.6 percentage points from 2012), reading (3.9 percentage points), science (1.8 percentage points) and composition (4.6 percentage points)," student performance is still abysmal.

D.C. schools have been plagued with controversial chancellors, allegations of cheating on standardized tests along with accusations of failure to adequately investigate that cheating, and failure to adequately educate students. Whether the expensive, new Dunbar High School will produce better-educated students remains to be seen. A community of concerned educators and parents focused on excellence, exhibiting the perseverance of which P. L. Dunbar wrote, on the other hand, would quite definitely go a long way toward improving student outcomes.

## Duncan Threatens CA (Continued from page 1)

mon Core." The editorial continues:

This is exactly the wrong way to do education reform in the American republic. One of the primary benefits of a federated republic is that states can function, in the famous phrase, as 'laboratories of democracy.' Common Core weakens that advantage when it comes to education. Manchester officials are right to question the wisdom of blindly adopting these untested standards. If only [New Hampshire]

state officials had done so earlier. (*New Hampshire Union Leader*, 9-22-13)

Many states are questioning Common Core implementation. Opposition to the well-financed and stealthily-enacted national education experiment is growing daily as elected officials, parents, and the public find out more. This is causing consternation, anger, and power plays on the part of the federal government and of entities that have received Gates Foundation money to support Common Core.

## Teacher Training (Continued from page 1)

for student-teaching in failing schools with failing teachers." (NPR.org, 9-30-09)

The book *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, published in 2011 and based on research by the Social Science Research Council, reported education majors are among those students with the lowest level of increase in critical-thinking skills during their college careers. The report offers a qualifier that this may be partially due to a lack of challenging reading and writing assignments in the major. (*InsideHigherEd.com*, 1-18-11)

## Locking Out Experts

The best and brightest are not applying to schools of education. Additionally, experts in important fields of study, notably STEM, cannot teach because they do not have "certification," a criterion favored by teacher unions to control the ranks of teachers. A qualified scientist, mathematician, or computer scientist is prohibited from leading a classroom in many states. In order to teach, these individuals would be required to take education classes. Some argue that what prospective educators know about their subject should take priority over their having certification, especially in light of widespread criticism of the certification process and the content of education classes.

Do education classes teach teachers how to teach? Certainly some do, but some simply propagandize education majors. At Vanderbilt University's Peabody School of Education, Education 2920 (Social and Philosophical Aspects of Education) is described as: "Exploration of the interaction between contemporary social problems and various philosophies in relation to educational theory, policy, and practice."

Barack Obama is featured on the cover of both the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the textbook required for this class, *American Education* by Joel Spring. Other books written by the same author include: *How Educational Ideologies are Shaping Global Society*; *Globalization and Educational Rights*; and *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*. Would taking this education class better enable a mathematician to teach calculus to students? A biologist to teach biology? A physicist to teach physics?

## The New York City Experiment

In August, New York City released scorecards on the dozen teacher education programs in the city that supply the most new teachers to city schools. The Teacher Preparation Program Report ranked local programs according to the "quality, distribution, and retention of new teacher hires"

from 2008-2012. Criteria included:

... the number of teachers with highest need licenses such as special education, science, and English as a Second Language; the number of teachers entering the City's highest need schools; teacher growth scores on 2012 State tests in 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and English; the results of tenure decisions; the number of teachers rated 'unsatisfactory'; and teacher retention after three years within the DOE system." (NYC Schools.gov, 8-14-13)

The rankings don't so much rate the schools themselves as how well the schools of education meet the needs of NYC schools. Broken out into categories the scores are useful; one in five recent graduates of teaching programs at Columbia University and New York University received low marks for how much they were able to improve student test scores. Citywide, 80% of recent hires still worked as teachers in the system three years later. The goal of the rankings according to education officials is to "focus on identifying and sharing effective practices." (*New York Times*, 8-15-13)

## Educators for Social Justice

Some teacher education programs have wandered "far from the mission of imparting knowledge, to the goal of social change." Just as insidious as training teachers poorly is teaching education majors propaganda. Books by socialists Bill Ayers and Paulo Freire are standard fare for education students. Sol Stern of the Manhattan Institute calls Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* "a utopian political tract calling for the overthrow of capitalist hegemony and the creation of classless societies." (*City Journal*, Spring 2009) Knowledge has become secondary to training teachers to be "change agents" ready to fix society using "social justice."

The chancellor of New York City schools said of the city's new teacher education ranking system, "By working with education schools to better prepare incoming teachers for the needs of our system, we'll be able to build on the historic outcomes we've delivered for our children." He also stated that teachers are the "game changers" for students.

Certainly teacher quality and schools of education aren't the only reason to worry about public education in America. But improving them — and making certain that future teachers focus on actual knowledge and how to best impart it to students — would improve education overall.