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Push Against Common Core Gains Momentum

As parents, citizens, and legislators learn more about Common Core, some are deciding it is not the best means of improving American education. Parents in many states are mounting grassroots campaigns against Common Core's standardization of learning and federal testing of students. In April, the Republican National Committee issued a resolution rejecting Common Core, saying it is a "plan [that] creates and fits the country with a nationwide straitjacket on academic freedom and achievement."

Critics of Common Core say it is an untried experiment that lacks legitimacy and empirical study and is now being foisted upon the entire U.S. school system. It has the potential to waste billions of dollars, multiple years of education efforts, and the learning potential of all schoolchildren.

Several state legislatures are considering withdrawing from Common Core (CC), delaying or not funding implementation, or withdrawing from national testing by government-funded

consortia. Four states never adopted CC: Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia. Minnesota accepted CC English standards, but rejected CC math. Private organizations developed CC; it was neither debated in public nor enacted by state legislators.

Certainly many Common Core promoters believe further centralization of education will improve educational outcomes, but power and cash may also be motivating some supporters. There is an immense amount of money flowing to public education because of Common Core implementation, and also to specific companies that are CC public-private partners that develop curriculum, create tests, and train educators to teach Common Core.

Federal Education Standards

On a national level, Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) is asking the Senate Appropriations Committee to cut off funds that allow the Obama administration to cajole states

into adopting Common Core standards and national standardized tests by tying some funding to CC adoption. Grassley challenges other legislators to co-sign his letter to the Appropriations Committee which documents that the Obama administration forced states to sign on to CC as a prerequisite to get Race to the Top money or to receive No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waivers. These waivers allow a state to continue receiving federal funding although NCLB requirements have not been met. Grassley's letter also addresses concerns about federalizing education:

The decision about what students should be taught and when it should be taught has enormous consequences for our children. Therefore, parents ought to have a straight line of accountability to those who are making such decisions. State legislatures, which are directly accountable to the

citizens of their states, are the appropriate place for those decisions to be made, free from any pressure from the U.S. Department of Education.

Opponents of Common Core state that nationalized education standards are unconstitutional, citing the 10th Amendment, which limits federal influence over states. The General Educational Provisions Act also prohibits federal overreach by prohibiting "any department, agency, officer, or employee of the United States [from exercising] any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution, school, or school system, or over the selection of library resources, textbooks, or other printed or published instructional materials by any educational institution or school system. . . ."

Federal Standardized Testing

Heavy reliance on standardized testing is another controversial aspect of Common Core. Critics suggest nationwide tests will neither improve education nor register whether education is improving. Some experts point to teachers "teaching to tests" and students who are anxious over standardized test results as root problems in American education.

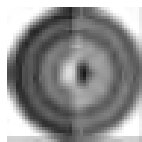
The *New York Daily News* reports that students from 33 New York City schools boycotted state exams that tested students according to Common Core standards that New York will not even begin teaching until September. Parents said their students would boycott tests because they oppose Common Core and the overuse of standardized testing. When 3rd- through 8th-graders took the tests in mid-April, one-third of students at the Earth School in Manhattan opted-out. The *New York Times* reports that among students who did take the tests, "many did not finish, and some students said classmates were crying at the end." (04-19-13)

A further complication in the rush to adopt Common Core is that competition to federal tests from private companies has arisen. The U.S. Department of Education gave \$360 million from the federal economic-stimulus act of 2009 to two consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) to develop national standardized tests. Some observers say competition could be the beginning of the end for PARCC and SBAC, as states like Alabama opt to use tests being prepared by non-federal competitors, like ACT/Pearson. Alabama chose ACT because it has background, infrastructure, and many years of successfully testing students (Fordham Institute, 04-16-13).

Invasion of Students' Privacy

Common Core gives unprecedented

(See *Common Core*, page 4)



COMMON CORE
STATE STANDARDS

Indiana Supreme Court Upholds Voucher Program

The Indiana Supreme Court ruled in March 2013 that the state voucher program allowing school choice for parents and students is constitutional. The unanimous court decision stated that it is within the legislature's power to provide vouchers and that public tax dollars can be used to fund private school tuition, even if the school has a religious affiliation.

The ruling is a major victory for those who support educational choice; it allows lower-income families to send their children to private school if they feel that public schools are wrong for their children.

Gov. Mike Pence, said, "I have long believed that parents should be able to choose where their children go to school,

regardless of their income. Now that the Indiana Supreme Court has unanimously upheld this important program, we must continue to find ways to expand educational opportunities for all Indiana families."



The teachers' union supported those who brought suit against vouchers in a lower court. "It's not great news for every public school kid across the state of Indiana," said plaintiff Teresa Meredith, who is vice president

of the Indiana State Teachers Association union. The union wants children to remain in public school even when the school is failing to meet students' needs.

Plaintiffs in the lawsuit claimed the voucher program "violated the state's duty to provide a free and 'uniform' public

school system." An online petition against the vouchers says that vouchers "do not help all students, but rather undermine the quality of public education available for all children." Critics say uniformity in education is not as important as quality and that quality is sometimes found lacking in government schools.

In 2011 almost 4,000 Indiana students used vouchers and the number jumped to over 9,000 in 2012. While there were limits on the number of students who could use vouchers in the first two years of the program, there are no limits in place for future years.

It is unlikely that plaintiffs will pursue a federal case because the Supreme Court already ruled that voucher programs are legal in a 2002 decision on an Ohio case. (*Indianapolis Star*, 03-27-13)

Miami-Dade Immigrant Student Squeeze

As the nation debates immigration policy, some Floridians are realizing the impact immigration has on their schools and how it influences children's potential to learn. A study initiated by the Miami-Dade school district, the fourth-largest in the nation, found that local taxpayers provide a minimum of \$22 million a year to educate immigrant students that is not reimbursed by the federal or state government. This expense is a result of approximately 1,000 new immigrant students a month arriving in Miami-Dade schools.

Federal law forces localities to educate all students, regardless of their immigrant status. In fact, schools may not even legally inquire as to citizenship status of families and students. The districts know the student status only by extrapolation

from the student's place of birth and that the student speaks no English.

The costs incurred by local school districts include: English-language-learner courses using certified ESOL-endorsed (English to Speakers of Other Language) teachers; physical accommodation such as space in class, desk, and books; and "transitional newcomer programs" to facilitate cultural adjustment, which the district must provide if there is evidence that the student has been "uprooted abruptly." Due to the nature of immigrant arrival, the expenses incurred are often beyond what schools have budgeted.

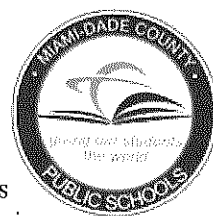
The Miami-Dade school district "Immigrant Impact Briefing" report maintains that the federal government should fully fund illegal immigrants' education be-

cause it is the failure to enforce immigration laws and national borders that allows undocumented immigrants to stress school budgets.

The report indicates that "in February there were more than 68,000 foreign-born students enrolled in classes . . . which is about one out of every five students, mostly from Cuba, though students come from countries as far flung as Poland and Nigeria."

Beyond fiscal concerns, an overabundance of students who don't speak English affects other students' ability to learn. The overall ranking of schools, in the district, the state, and the nation changes when immigrant students are

(See *Miami-Dade*, page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

Data from a drug-testing lab and police reports show that marijuana use among teenagers and children has greatly increased since passage of Colorado Amendment 64, which legalized the drug for adult recreational use. Not just more teenagers are using marijuana, but they are using more of it, resulting in an increased and longer "high." According to a Denver news station, recent studies show that marijuana doubles the risk of a car accident. Research also shows it to cause lasting and irreversible harm to adolescents' "intelligence, attention, and memory." (CBS, 03-06-13 and PNAS.org, 08-27-12)

A school principal in Michigan called toy World War II soldiers on a child's birthday cupcakes "insensitive," in light of the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary school. Even after public scrutiny, the principal stood by her decision, saying in a press release that the decorations were disallowed in order to create "a safe place for [children] to learn, grow, and have respectful dialogues about their differences." The 3rd-grader's father said, "I think it is disgusting ... that they're putting [soldiers] together with sociopaths that shoot children." (Washington Times, 03-11-12)

Steven Hayward, formerly of the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation, is the first to fill the position of Visiting Scholar of Conservative Thought at the University of Colorado at Boulder. In response to the position created with \$1 million in donations, Peter Wood, President of the National Association of Scholars, said, "What is needed, rather than an attempt to balance left and right politics, is a *depoliticized* academy in which scholars and students pursue the truth wherever it may lead."

During the 2009-10 school year, the most recent data the Dept. of Education provides, 4.7 million, or 10% of American students, were English language learners. More than 2/3rds of these students were born in the U.S. (AP, 04-14-13).

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Choose Your Sex: Transgenderism at School

Transgenderism is being addressed in American schools from elementary to university level. What was once an anomaly is becoming normalized with the help of compliant courts, governmental entities, complicit politicians, and spearheading organizations.

A male 1st-grader in the Fountain-Fort Carson School District in Colorado will not be allowed to use the girls' bathroom. The young boy wears dresses to school and "self-identifies" as a girl. Although his state-issued ID and passport list him as a female, he is biologically a male. The school offered the child use of the gender-neutral faculty bathroom, the nurse's bathroom, or the boys' bathroom.

The Colorado school district claims their decision was made out of consideration for the comfort of female students who would not like a male in their bathroom. His parents have contacted the state of Colorado Civil Rights Division, and will homeschool until the issue is resolved to their liking. This is expected to end up in court.

An eleven-page directive issued by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) in February 2013 allows boys and girls who identify with a sex differing from their own physiology to use the bath-

room and locker room in which they feel most comfortable. The DOE is responding to a state law that added "gender identity" to the non-discrimination code.

All Massachusetts schools are now required to accept the sex a student chooses as his or her own, regardless of biology, and allow bathroom and locker room access accordingly. Critics of the DOE edict argue that the new law did not require such a broad directive from the education department, but that the result is what can be expected when states add gender identity to state non-discrimination policies.

As of August 2013 Brown University student health insurance will begin covering sex change operations for those students who want them. According to the campus Director of Insurance and Purchasing Services, "the total package of sexual reassignment surgeries, hormone therapy and other services can cost up to \$50,000." (*National Review*, 02-07-13)

The University of Iowa is the first public college to offer a transgender check box along with those of male and female on its application for admission. An additional application question is,

(See *Transgenderism*, page 4)

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



NC Governor McCrory Questions College Courses

North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory said on a radio show in January, "I think some of the educational elite have taken over our education." He decried colleges "where we are offering courses that have no chance of getting people jobs." He stated what is obvious to many, but was pilloried by some in the press and by some educators. In the face of massive unemployment rates among new college graduates, unprecedented student loan debt and default, and complaints by employers that graduates are unready to join the workforce, critics wonder what would be wrong with course subsidization having some tie to future job attainment. This is not to say that all courses must be tied to the job market, but some feel that cost justification for some areas of study may be warranted.

The University of North Carolina (UNC) Chapel Hill student newspaper, *The Tar Heel*, expressed fears that McCrory is not an "education governor" and that he threatens North Carolina's education "legacy." The newspaper decried his statement that the state can't keep "simply spending more money on a broken system." (01-28-13) Yet, by all indications, McCrory is indeed an "education governor." 56% of his proposed

2013-15 state budget, \$11 billion, is slated for education. His proposed budget is also fiscally responsible; it authorizes no new debt and proposes no state tax increases.

Ready for Jobs?

McCrory's concerns stem from high unemployment rates in North Carolina and the fact that employers there can't find qualified workers to fill open jobs. McCrory said on former U.S. Education Secretary Bill Bennett's radio show, "I'm going to adjust my education curriculum to what business and commerce need to get our kids jobs, as opposed to moving back in with their parents after they graduate with debt."

Editors of the *Raleigh News Observer* said, "The governor would be wise to consider that the UNC system has produced a well-educated work force over many generations and represents an investment that delivers big returns to the state in many ways. The system is working. The governor should not succumb to political opportunists who want us to believe it isn't." (01-30-13)

But is higher education "working"? A report by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

(See *College Courses*, page 4)

Book of the Month



The K-12 Implosion, Glenn Harlan Reynolds, Encounter Books, 2013, \$5.99

The Reagan-era report, "A Nation at Risk," told us 30 years ago, "If an unfriendly foreign

power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." Student performance has improved little since that report shocked America into considering education reform. What has increased is the money being spent on education, which has not resulted in a corresponding increase in learning.

Glenn Harlan Reynolds, a law professor at the University of Tennessee, argues in *The K-12 Implosion* that students' underperformance and government's massive spending will soon force changes from within the education establishment or market forces will change it from the outside.

"From 1998 to 2008, Wisconsin public schools increased their per pupil spending by \$4,245 in real terms, yet did not add a single point to the reading scores of their eighth-graders and still could lift only one-third of their eighth-graders to at least a 'proficient' level in reading." The average total compensation for a teacher in the Milwaukee public school is more than \$100,000 per year. Reynolds says, "Wisconsin's situation is typical of public education around the country ... [It is now] vastly more expensive without producing significantly better results."

Reynolds points to how the money is spent as one answer to the lack of performance results. "Between 1950 and 2009, the number of K-12 public school students increased by 96% [while] ... the ranks of administrators and other [non-teaching] staff grew by 70%."

Parents and other taxpayers are losing faith in public education and are seeking change. Teachers' unions are attempting to retain the status quo are powerful, but there are many more parents than there are unionized teachers. Parents demand vouchers and school choice to better educate their children.

There are two ways in which things can move forward: "new and innovative approaches can take place within the context of publicly funded education. On the other [hand], they can be embraced by parents who are fleeing what they regard as a failing public system." The second scenario will result in the implosion that Reynolds predicts.

Reynolds says that public education will only survive if it can become cheaper, more flexible, more innovative, and more parent friendly. This is the opposite of what Common Core will achieve, and Common Core is the opposite of what will improve American education.

THE
**K-12
IMPLOSION**
GLENN HARLAN
REYNOLDS
ENCOUNTER #31

Common Core *(Continued from page 1)*

access to students' personal information to schools and third parties and thus may invade student and family privacy. Privacy laws have previously prohibited such data from being available, but those laws have been changed and reinterpreted to allow such information as name, address, social security number, attendance, test scores, learning disabilities, and family information to be recorded and shared. The Obama administration made changes to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), broadening the collection of students' information and sharing it with other agencies. This information will not only be available to schools, but also to researchers and private companies. The Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and Rupert Murdoch of News Corp. have funded and developed this database system and recently turned it over to a nonprofit corporation called inBloom, established for the purpose of controlling the information. There are security risks involved in the collection and storage of students' data.

The *New York Daily News* reports that parents were neither informed nor did they give permission for New York to allow private data about their children to be collected and shared. The report continues:

If this information leaks out or is improperly used, it could stigmatize a child and damage his or her prospects for life. The state and the city are setting themselves up for multimillion-dollar class-action suits if and when these data breaches occur. The data [which] inBloom receives from the education department will be placed in a vulnerable data cloud. Many technology professionals do not trust clouds for their more sensitive data (03-14-13).

Opponents of the data collection and storage, which is already in full swing in nine states and scheduled for use in all Common Core states, include the New York Civil Liberties Union and ParentalRights.org.

The "sphere of privacy within the family" is effectively being broken down and destroyed by those who want to track children. This is in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which "has repeatedly browbeat nations to create a national database just like this that will allow the government to track children, purportedly to make sure their human rights are being protected — different declared purpose, same kind of system, same invasion of privacy for government purposes," states ParentalRights.org President Michael P. Farris (WorldNetDaily.com, 04-25-13).

"Turning massive amounts of personal data about public school students [over] to a private corporation without any public input is profoundly disturbing and irresponsible," the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union told the *Daily News*. The Electronic Privacy Information Center in Washington is suing the U.S. Education Department in an effort to stop the illegal collection, storage, and sharing of student data (03-13-13).

Follow the Money

Those who oppose Common Core are fighting an uphill battle against the

money and political forces that created, fund, and promote Common Core. Why has Bill Gates spent millions of dollars to develop, support, and fund the establishment of Common Core standards and testing in U.S. public schools? Why did Exxon Mobil Corporation blitz television coverage of the Masters golf tournament with ads promoting Common Core? These questions are not easily answered.

Along with the federal government, private philanthropies and private companies have dumped money into Common Core in a manner unprecedented in American education. Arne Duncan's appointment as President Obama's Secretary of Education marked a new era of opportunity for private influence on public education, and under his watch public-private partnerships have flourished. There are also swinging personnel doors between the Gates Foundation and the Department of Education, although that would be illegal if they were professional rather than amateur lobbyists.

The Common Core revolt is definitely grassroots whereas Common Core has big money behind it. Bill Gates gave the National PTA \$1 million and funds think tanks that favor Common Core. And the Gates Foundation money isn't slowing down. It is currently soliciting proposals from teachers:

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is accepting proposals from organizations, primarily those that consider themselves to be networks of teachers, to support implementation of Common Core State Standards in literacy and mathematics. Through its "Shifting into High Gear: Accelerating the Common Core Through Teacher Networks" initiative, the foundation will award grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 to organizations working to accelerate implementation of the Common Core across a robust teacher network. Priority will be given to innovative approaches, which create scalable solutions that travel across networks quickly and broadly (FoundationCenter.org, 03-13-13).

The Gates Foundation now wields tremendous influence in American education. Michael B. Petrilli, executive vice president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute that has received millions in Gates Foundation grant money, told the *Puget Sound Business Journal* in 2009, "It is not unfair to say that the Gates Foundation's agenda has become the country's agenda in education." Mr. Petrilli wrote at the Fordham website in April 2013, criticizing the Republican National Committee statement against Common Core, "Republicans used to stand for standards. We're confident that once GOP governors and legislators have a chance to give this language a look, they will again." Mr. Petrilli seems to suggest that those who oppose Common Core are opposed to standards. But for many of Common Core's opponents, the opposite is true. The more they learn about the standards and the way they are being implemented, the less they find to like.

Miami-Dade *(Continued from page 1)*

counted in testing results; they don't know English and therefore cannot do well on standardized tests. Immigrant students influence accountability data that report school graduation and dropout rates. Students are treated as proficient in English after just one year as English language learners. Although \$22 million is only 1% of the Miami Dade Public Schools \$2.7 billion annual general fund, a school district representative said, "There's a lot we can do with \$22 million." (*Miami Herald*, 03-09-13)



Transgenderism *(Continued from page 2)*

"Do you identify with the LGBTQ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer] Community?" The University of Iowa executive director of admissions said, "The new LGBTQ question on our undergraduate application reflects our foundational commitment to inclusion of all students, no matter what their origin or orientation."

A February 2013 conference at the University of California-Riverside, called "20 Years of LGBTQ Progress," celebrated the movement to normalize and promulgate these lifestyles. There are LGBTQ centers at most University of California (UC) campuses and over 20 different LGBTQ organizations on the UC Los Angeles campus, alone. (TheCollegeFix.com, 02-05-13)

A founding director of the UC Davis LGBTQ Center is quoted at the UC Riverside conference website:

Prior to the formal founding of the *Cantú* Queer Center at UC Santa Cruz in 1997, queer students were emerging from hostile high school environments onto our campus with few coordinated resources and no safe and accessible queer-centric space in which to heal and explore their sexualities and genders. Queer and questioning students received no consistent guidance from professional staff. . . . Transgender students, staff, and faculty paid for their transition needs out-of-pocket. . . . The impact of our collective advocacy has been significant.

College Courses *(Continued from page 2)*

that was "meant to bolster support for institutions that emphasize the liberal arts in the face of criticism" acknowledges the failures in current education. The AAC&U report found:

More than 40% of employers already don't think colleges are teaching students what they need to know to succeed. A third say graduates aren't even qualified for entry-level work, and more than half say new hires with college degrees don't have the skills they need to ultimately be promoted.

A full 93% of the 318 corporate leaders questioned for the AAC&U report indicated that "a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than a job candidate's undergraduate major." (Hechinger Report, 04-29-13)

It isn't just that students graduate without qualifications for entry-level jobs. Some are indoctrinated into a victim vs. society mentality that makes them unable to think clearly enough to adapt to the world outside of college. Thus their education actually has a negative impact on their ability to enter the workforce. Many graduates are also unable to express themselves well, either verbally or in writing.

Women's Studies at UNC Chapel Hill

During the radio interview, Gov. McCrory called particular attention to gender studies programs as an area that may require job-based funding. Critics of "identity studies" courses say they indoctrinate students, rather than educate them. Inherent to all women's studies classes is a politicized curriculum, advocacy of political action, and a basis in grievance. A review of the Spring 2013 UNC Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) Department of Women's and Gender Studies course catalog confirms this. A UNC-CH freshman seminar titled "Plantation Lullabies" is described: "Focuses on power, politics, and represen-

tation as expressed through the plantation paradigm. . . . We will also consider how our own identities (sexual, racial, gender, national, and class) influence our reactions and relationships with various texts and our environment."

The class "Moral and Philosophical Issues of Gender in Society seeks to answer the questions: How do we distinguish between genders and how is this related to the oppression of women by men? How is sexism related to other forms of oppression, including homophobia and speciesism?" This class seems to encourage young women to hate men for perceived biases that cause them to endure a rough life in America. The fact that women go to college in larger numbers than men do and get more advanced degrees than men do is ignored by those pushing this indoctrination on students.

Implications of higher education's failure to educate go beyond North Carolina. As Jane Shaw, president of the Pope Center of Higher Education said, "For many students, college is a smorgasbord of easy courses chosen for the lack of academic rigor. There is no serious 'core curriculum.' . . . When students can get a minor in 'Social and Economic Justice' without ever taking a course in the economics department, it's hardly surprising that businesses aren't lining up to hire them." (*Wall Street Journal*, 02-04-13)

UNC President Tom Ross responded to McCrory's criticism saying, "The University's value to North Carolina should not be measured by jobs filled alone." Most would agree with that assessment. But when students' area of study closes their minds and dulls their intellect, particularly when it comes to taxpayer-funded education, some differentiation between what will lead to jobs, what is edifying for personal growth, and what is simply dwelling on negativity and victimhood may be judicious.