

Why Parents Object to Common Core Standards

Reasons to object to the implementation of Common Core (CC) standards are numerous. Critics object to the manner in which they were created, adopted and funded, and say they are unconstitutional and illegal. The standards themselves are complicated and some worry that CC is inferior to some current state standards and intends to indoctrinate rather than teach students. The creation of an invasive student and family online database is troubling, as is the massive cost of implementing Common Core, which will strain states and communities.

How Were Common Core Standards Created?

Common Core standards were not developed by and did not emanate from states. They were funded and developed at the behest of two Washington, D.C.-based trade organizations, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association (NGA), through their contractor Achieve, Inc., with generous funding from the Gates Foundation and other private philanthropies. Some Common Core developers have questionable motives and backgrounds. Common Core standardized test creator Linda Darling-Hammond was President Obama's top choice for education secretary but was never nominated because of her controversial leftist leanings; she is a close associate of domestic terrorist turned educator Bill Ayers. (See book review in this *Education Reporter*) Common Core was developed in closed meetings, without public debate, by committees.

How Was Common Core Adopted by States?

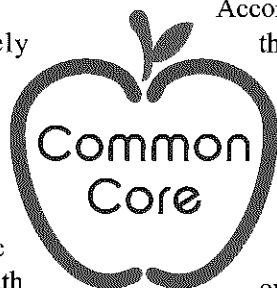
State Governors or State Boards of Education signed on to Common Core standards before even seeing the standards, after being cajoled to do so and "bribed" by promises of federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grants by the Obama administration. Only some states received money from the competitive RTTT grants. States were also threatened with the loss of No Child Left Behind waivers if they did not align, which would have meant significant loss of federal financial support. State legislatures, which represent the public, were not involved in the decision to adopt Common Core standards. Neither was the U.S. Congress.

Illegal and Unconstitutional Federal Overreach

Nationalized education standards should be considered unconstitutional under the 10th Amendment. 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. . . ."

Common Core severely limits local control of education. The standards are copyrighted by the CCSSO and NGA and licensed only to states. Federal dictates assure that 85% of academic standards in reading and math will strictly adhere to CC standards, leaving only 15% flexibility. With only 15% of the standards eligible to be altered by the local district, a state choosing to teach cursive writing instead of just the keyboarding mandated by CC would likely use up the entire 15% on this one change. Nationalized tests are more fed-



eral interference. These standardized tests will drive curriculum and textbooks.

Education standards could have been improved without federal intervention. According to Lindsey M. Burke of the Heritage Foundation:

States and local school districts can have success improving their standards and assessments without surrendering control to Washington.

Increasing transparency of outcomes in a way that is meaningful to parents and taxpayers, providing flexibility for local school leaders, and advancing systemic reforms that include school choice options for families will go a long way in improving academic outcomes while at the same time preserving local control of education.

Invasion of Student and Family Privacy

Common Core calls for unprecedented monitoring, collection, and sharing of private student and family information. The Obama administration made changes to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), changing and reinterpreting laws to allow personally identifiable information such as name, address, Social Security number, attendance, test scores, learning disabilities, and family information to be recorded and shared with other agencies. This information will be available not only to the government, but also to researchers and private companies. The Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and Rupert Murdoch of News Corporation funded and developed the

(See *Common Core Standards*, page 4)

Comic Books in Classrooms

Graphic novels used to be considered useful for underachieving and learning disabled students, as a means to capture their interest and get them reading. Now they are entering the mainstream of education, partially due to their inclusion as a component of Common Core English standards that have been adopted by most states. Even honor students are reading comic books these days.

"It will come as little surprise to anyone who works with children and young adults that graphic novels disappear from library shelves faster than anything else (except, maybe, vampire novels) and are the topic of eager discussion whenever they find their way into classrooms," wrote one librarian in *American Libraries* magazine (08-01-2011). Critics of using comic books in schools may suggest that

vampire novels aren't the best choice for children's reading material either.

The president of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English told the *Chicago Tribune* that since graphic novels are specifically addressed in the Common Core standards, they will have a larger role in classrooms. In the Common Core standards it is suggested, for example, that 5th-graders "analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text e.g., *graphic novel*, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem. (Common Core standards, Reading: Literature CCSS.ELA Literacy.RL.5.7)

A teacher at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois has students read Elie Wiesel's Holocaust book *Night*, along with the 1992 Pulitzer Prize



winning graphic novel *Maus*, also based on the Holocaust; *Maus* presents humans as animals (Jews as mice, Germans as cats). "You're always going to have the traditionalists say comic books aren't real literature, and I guess to a certain extent they have a point. But my point is that it is different literature," says the teacher. (*Chicago Tribune*, 12-27-12)

Combining the visual aspect of comic book format in addition to reading a series-

(See *Comic Books*, page 4)

Zero Tolerance Run Amok

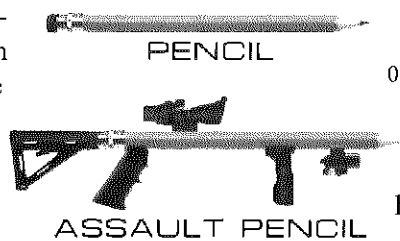
A 2nd-grader who pointed a pencil and made shooting noises in a Suffolk, Virginia elementary school is the latest to be suspended in zero-tolerance "gun" incidents. Although the teacher wrote on the suspension notice, "I told him to stop and he did," she carried the incident to the next level, and the principal suspended the 7-year-old and his fellow pencil-wielding classmate for two days.

A school representative, Bethanne Bradshaw, said, "A pencil is a weapon when it is pointed at someone in a threatening way and gun noises are made." Despite community outrage and dozens of calls to the school, school administrators continued to defend their actions.

The father of the suspended boy, a Marine Corps veteran, said his son is a good student and has never had any discipline problems. His son told him, "Well, I was being a Marine and the

other guy was being a bad guy." (WAVY.com, 05-06-13) The school in Suffolk is located in the Tidewater, Virginia area which is home to many military bases.

Plastic Hello Kitty bubble guns, Pop Tarts bitten roughly into the shape of a gun, toy World War II soldiers atop cupcakes, and now pencils are scaring educators across the nation into taking actions many consider ridiculous. Critics say zero tolerance policies enforced with no reflection, discernment, or common sense are making a mockery



of the real issue of school safety.

Forbidding little boys to express their natural instinct towards creative play, imagination, and their masculine tendencies is harmful to their development. According to his mother, the youngster in Suffolk was worried sick after the incident. "He said he was a little nervous," said Wendy Marshall. "His stomach was hurting and my husband and I reassured him, 'You have nothing to worry about. You did nothing wrong. You're not in trouble.'" Children are perceptive and the boy certainly knew he was "in trouble." Stripping little boys of the masculine tendency toward military play could even result in a devastating emasculation of males that could harm the nation when called upon to field an army.

When school administrators take zero tolerance to this extreme, they become fear-mongering strangers to common sense rather than responsible adults looking out for the safety of all students.

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Indiana has become the first state to put a moratorium on implementation of Common Core standards. The legislature and governor chose the delay in favor of "allowing public hearings and a fiscal analysis before further implementation."

Floridians have stopped a bill that would have connected that state with the federal Department of Education in order to share student data in accordance with Common Core requirements. Education Liberty Watch and Floridians Against Common Core joined together to protest a bill that failed to protect the privacy of child and family data from government bureaucrats and private education companies. SB 878 died in conference committee, so Florida's data sharing with the federal government is on hold.

VTech is selling the InnoTab 2 Baby tablet computer geared to infants as young as 12 months old. "Babies as young as 12 months just have this natural propensity to want to do whatever their parents are doing," says the company. Experts at the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media released a joint statement in 2012 "discouraging parents from exposing children younger than two years old to screens." (Wall Street Journal, 05-06-13)

Maine Gov. Paul LePage proposes that high schools in Maine reimburse colleges for remedial courses their graduates are forced to take in order to do college work. "LePage's bill would require the Department of Education to reduce each school district's subsidy by the cost of the remedial courses and pay those funds to the [Maine] higher education institution." The governor's proposals also remove limits on the number of charter schools and allow colleges to start and oversee charters. The president of the Maine Education Association teachers union said, "This is proof the governor will go to great lengths to cause even more harm to our schools." (Bangor Daily News, 05-09-13)

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax (314) 721-3373. Editor: Virginia Barth. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

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Union Profs Protest MOOCs

In an effort to innovate, to offer the best quality teaching, and to save money, some colleges are offering courses called MOOCs, or Massive Open Online Courses. MOOCs began as free and not-for-credit, but they are making their way into the mainstream of higher education, arriving amidst applause and controversy. The three largest MOOC providers are edX, Udacity, and Coursera.

Last fall San José State University (SJSU), part of the California public college system, began offering a MOOC created by edX, a nonprofit collaboration between Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The class was successful in that 91% of the students passed, compared to the 59% of students who passed the same traditional course. The comparison is somewhat flawed because while the

MOOC students watched MIT video lectures, they also participated in small group projects that may have greatly contributed to their grasp of the subject.

The SJSU pilot program, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, was an introductory engineering course in electronic circuitry that future engineers must pass with at least a grade of C as a prerequisite to continue in the major. Historically, two of every five students earn a grade below C and must repeat the class or change their major (New York Times, 04-30-13).

Spurred on by the seeming success in the engineering class, SJSU is offering MOOCs to students in other departments. Objecting to renowned Harvard professor Michael Sandel's online lectures being part of a philosophy course, professors in the SJSU philosophy department wrote an open letter to Sandel saying that they

(See *Union Profs*, page 4)

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Yoga In Schools

Yoga is now being offered in many U.S. schools. Some question the judgment of those offering yoga classes for children. In some schools, parents have protested against it. First Lady Michelle Obama is a strong proponent of yoga in her "Let's Move" national anti-obesity program. She also gives talks on school visits about the benefits of yoga. The White House Easter Egg Roll has included a Yoga Garden, complete with mats and instructors, for the past five years. It was part of the day on April 1, 2013. (Sequestration did not cause this event to be canceled.)

Critics who object to yoga being taught in public schools say there is an Eastern religious bent to the practice, that it is linked to worship that some religious observers should avoid, and that children should not be used as guinea pigs told to participate in an activity schools may know little about.

The Sanskrit word "yoga" literally means "to join or yoke together." Although scholars say yoga predates Buddhism and Hinduism, the meditation and physical postures have long been integrated into those faiths as a means to worship various gods. It is common to see people on the streets of India doing yoga poses in front of statues of gods, as a means of worship.

"Many schools are looking to yoga for a holistic approach," states the director of physical education for the Charleston County Public School District in South Carolina, in defense of the teaching of yoga. Claiming to be a Christian, a yoga teacher at one Charleston school claims, "Yoga isn't a religion. It is an art, a philosophy. It's a tool for mind and body control." Another SC yoga instructor at a public school says, referring to karma, which is aligned with Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh beliefs, "Karma means doing good or simply stewardship, but the language barrier can have an unexpected negative response with an uninformed audience." (Post and Courier, 02-27-13) A closer examination leads to questions about who exactly is uninformed.

In California, parents in the Encinitas Union School District looked to the National Center for Law and Policy to fight against yoga instruction in schools. The stretches, breathing techniques, and postures seem harmless enough on the surface, but one Encinitas parent who observed her son's class told National Public Radio:

They were being taught to thank the sun for their lives and the warmth that it brought, the life that it brought to the earth and they were told to do that right before they did their sun salutation exercises.

(See *Yoga in Schools*, page 4)

Book of the Month



Bill Ayers: Teaching Revolution, by Mary Grabar, Ph.D., Dissident Prof Press, 2013, \$12.00

Many are familiar with Bill Ayers as a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and co-founder of the communist Weather Underground, from whose living room Barack Obama launched his political career. Some may not realize he repositioned himself as an educator after ten years on the run from the FBI. During Ayers' 23 years as a professor of education, specializing in K-12 at the University of Chicago, he influenced thousands of students who are now in classrooms affecting America's future.

Mary Grabar describes Ayers' shift from directly and illegally undermining the United States to more covertly undermining it from within the system. Ayers' Marxist and anarchist beliefs never changed from when he was a young, nihilistic 1%-er (his father was CEO of Com Edison), attempting to blow up places and kill people in the name of bringing down "the establishment." His career as an educator has encouraged the destruction of America's way of life by corrupting political, moral, social, and education standards.

In accordance with the 1962 SDS Port Huron Statement, on which "victimhood" studies are based, 1960s leftist agitators moved from the streets into universities. These "scholars who spur movements" using class warfare and racial and sexual divides are successful, as evidenced by the current focus on social justice and multiculturalism.

Ayers' continued political activism includes helping form a resurgent SDS group, supporting and speaking during Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, and delivering an anti-U.S. rant in front of Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez. In Venezuela he said, "Capitalism promotes racism and militarism."

Ayers' book *To Teach* is widely used in schools of education; there is even a comic book version of it, in case some find the original version too challenging. Mary Grabar contends that Ayers is not a legitimate educator since "everything he promotes goes against producing independent thinkers who understand evidence and argument."

In *To Teach*, Ayers disputes the idea that "good teachers always know the materials," claiming that is a myth. Grabar refutes this, saying common sense and evidence show "the best predictor of a student's grasp of the material is the teacher's knowledge of it."

Ayers wrote a *New York Times* article promoting Linda Darling-Hammond, a major player in developing standards and testing for Common Core, for Secretary of Education. Grabar offers strategies to overcome the havoc caused by Ayers and his ilk in education; one strategy she suggests is the abolition of Common Core.



FOCUS: A New Birth of Education Freedom

by Star Parker

First appeared at Townhall.com on April 1, 2013. Reprinted with permission of the author.

As the nation has focused on the Supreme Court hearings on the constitutionality of same-sex marriage, news from the state of Indiana could prove far more important regarding the nation's future.

The Indiana Supreme Court has just ruled unanimously, 5-0, that Indiana's school voucher program, signed into law in 2011, the most expansive school voucher program in the nation, does not violate the state's constitution.

Those who challenged the law argued that the voucher program is unconstitutional because it allows public funds to be used for religious education.

Not so, said the court. The voucher goes to the families, not the schools. It is the parents who decide how to spend it.

Why do I draw a connection between the U.S. Supreme Court's review of same-sex marriage and this voucher decision in

Indiana? And why do I suggest that the Indiana decision may be more important to the nation's future than whatever the Supreme Court decides on same-sex marriage?

Same-sex marriage sits before the Supreme Court today because of the dramatic change in public opinion over recent years regarding the legitimacy and morality of same-sex marriage and homosexual relations. General public opinion is far more accepting today of both than it has been in the past.

What has driven this change?

One obvious place to look is the direct generational correlation regarding acceptance of same-sex marriage. Younger Americans are far more accepting of these values than older Americans.

According to the latest survey from the Pew Research Center, approval of same-sex marriage among those born between 1928-1945 is 31 percent; 1946-1964, 38 percent; 1965-1980, 49 percent; and after 1980, 70 percent.

So it seems quite reasonable to conclude that the systematic purge over the last half-century of religion and traditional values from our public schools has produced a new generation of Americans with values different from those of their parents and grandparents.

In 1962 the Supreme Court found state-sponsored school prayer unconstitutional. Subsequently, the Supreme Court found unconstitutional posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools (1980), public schools setting aside time for private or voluntary prayer (1985), and "performance of religious activity" at school promotional and graduation ceremonies (1992).

The rationale behind all these decisions was supposedly to preserve and protect religious liberty in our public schools.

But this is not at all what has been happening. The result has not been value-free public schools that just teach reading,

writing and arithmetic. The result has been to purge traditional religious values from our public schools and replace them with different values — secular humanism.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, "all states are somehow involved in sex education for public school children."

The National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union, thought it relevant to their mission to issue a press statement about the same-sex marriage cases currently before the Supreme Court. According to their statement:

"Proposition 8 and DOMA (both of which support traditional marriage) aren't just unconstitutional, they contradict American values of fairness, inclusion, and freedom for all."

So somehow it is fair and constitutional, in the view of the NEA, that our schools not be permitted to teach right and wrong, as Christians have understood them from the Bible for a few thousand years, while it is fair and free to teach secular humanism in their place.

Thanks to former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, who signed into law the Indiana voucher program, and a sane and sober court in Indiana, Indiana helps pave the way for a new birth of education freedom in America in which parents can choose where to send their child to school.

No longer will kids be captive to left-wing brainwashing in Indiana public schools. Hopefully soon this will be the case nationwide.

Star Parker is the founder and president of CURE, the Center for Urban Renewal and Education, a think tank that promotes market based public policy to fight poverty and encourages restoring dignity through faith, freedom, and personal responsibility.

The Role of 'Educators'

by Thomas Sowell

First appeared at Townhall.com on January 8, 2013. Reprinted with permission from Creators.com.

Many years ago, as a young man, I read a very interesting book about the rise of the Communists to power in China. In the last chapter, the author tried to explain why and how this had happened.

Among the factors he cited were the country's educators. That struck me as odd, and not very plausible, at the time. But the passing years have made that seem less and less odd, and more and more plausible. Today, I see our own educators playing a similar role in creating a mindset that undermines American society.

Schools were once thought of as places where a society's knowledge and experience were passed on to the younger generation. But, about a hundred years ago, Professor John Dewey of Columbia University came up with a very different conception of education — one that has spread through American schools of education, and even influenced education in countries overseas.

John Dewey saw the role of the teacher, not as a transmitter of a society's culture to the young, but as an agent of change — someone strategically placed, with an opportunity to condition students to want a different kind of society.

A century later, we are seeing schools across America indoctrinating students to believe in all sorts of politically correct notions. The history that is taught in too

many of our schools is a history that emphasizes everything that has gone bad, or can be made to look bad, in America — and that gives little, if any, attention to the great achievements of this country.

If you think that is an exaggeration, get a copy of *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn and read it. As someone who used to read translations of official Communist newspapers in the days of the Soviet Union, I know that those papers' attempts to degrade the United States did not sink quite as low as Howard Zinn's book.

That book has sold millions of copies, poisoning the minds of millions of students in schools and colleges against their own country. But this book is one of many things that enable teachers to think of themselves as "agents of change," without having the slightest accountability for whether that change turns out to be for the better or for the worse — or, indeed, utterly catastrophic.

This misuse of schools to undermine one's own society is not something confined to the United States or even to our own time.

It is common in Western countries for educators, the media and the intelligentsia in general, to single out Western civilization for special condemnation for sins that have been common to the human race, in all parts of the world, for thousands of years.



Meanwhile, all sorts of fictitious virtues are attributed to non-Western societies, and their worst crimes are often passed over in silence, or at least shrugged off by saying some such thing as "Who are we to judge?"

Even in the face of mortal dangers, political correctness forbids us to use words like "terrorist" when the approved euphemism is "militant." Milder terms such as "illegal alien" likewise cannot pass the political correctness test, so it must be replaced by another euphemism, "undocumented worker."

Some think that we must tiptoe around in our own country, lest some foreigners living here or visiting here be offended by the sight of an American flag or a Christmas tree in some institutions.

In France between the two World Wars, the teachers union decided that schools should replace patriotism with internationalism and pacifism. Books that told the story of the heroic defense of French soldiers against the German invaders at Verdun in 1916, despite

suffering massive casualties, were replaced by books that spoke impartially about the suffering of all soldiers — both French and German — at Verdun.

Germany invaded France again in 1940, and this time the world was shocked when the French surrendered after just six weeks of fighting — especially since military experts expected France to win. But two decades of undermining French patriotism and morale had done their work.

American schools today are similarly undermining American society as one unworthy of defending, either domestically or internationally. If there were nuclear attacks on American cities, how long would it take for us to surrender, even if we had nuclear superiority — but were not as willing to die as our enemies were?

Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and the author of dozens of books.

Common Core Continued from page 1)

CC 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.

Parents and legislators were neither informed nor did they give permission for Common Core to allow private data about children to be collected and shared.

It is expected that Common Core will affect private schools and homeschoolers, not just in the materials available but that laws will be stretched to include them in the standards and the collection of personal data.

Higher Standards or Standards of Mediocrity?

Proponents of Common Core standards claim they will graduate students to be career- and college-ready. However, one of CC's creators, Dr. Jason Zimba, admitted in March 2010 at a meeting of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that "college ready" means ready for a non-selective two-year community college, not a selective four-year institution. The minutes of that Massachusetts meeting read: "Mr. Zimba said the concept of college readiness is minimal and focuses on non-selective colleges."

The Common Core standards claim to provide "evidence-based rigorous content." In reality the mediocrity and deficiencies of Common Core standards, which are not based on empirical evidence, are many and have been exposed by education experts.

Dr. Sandra Stotsky, the architect of Massachusetts' excellent education standards, sat on the English Language Arts committee for Common Core and refused to sign off on the CC standards, saying "they were not internationally benchmarked or research-based." She described them as empty skill sets that won't prepare students for authentic college course work, and said, "there is absolutely no empirical research to suggest that college readiness is promoted by informational or nonfiction reading in high school English classes or in mathematics and science classes." (See *Education Reporter Focus*, March 2013)

Professor R. James Milgram of Stanford University, the only professional mathematician on the Common Core Validation Committee, also declined to sign off on the CC standards. He has spoken

against the standards in several states and testified in Indiana:

The Common Core [math] standards claim to be "benchmarked against international standards" but this phrase is meaningless. They are actually two or more years behind international expectations by 8th grade, and only fall further behind as they talk about grades 8 - 12. Indeed, they don't even fully cover the material in a solid geometry course, or in a second-year algebra course.

Since Common Core delays the teaching of algebra from 8th to 9th grade, it will be nearly impossible for graduating seniors to complete calculus, a required course for admission to many four-year universities.

How Much Will Common Core Cost?

At a time when many states and school districts are struggling to stay afloat financially, Common Core demands that current textbooks be replaced with those aligned with the new standards, that teachers be retrained to teach in alignment with CC standards and CC standardized tests, and that schools fund technological updates necessary for every student to complete computerized testing, including purchasing additional computers and increasing broadband capacity.

Estimates to implement the standards and testing range from \$12 to \$16 billion. The fact that states cannot even figure out how much Common Core alignment will cost them is further evidence that they had no hand in developing the standards.

The Pioneer Institute report on "National Cost of Aligning States and Localities to the Common Core Standards" estimates that, for just the testing mandated by the federal government, the "annual cost of assessment for states participating in the consortia will increase by a total of \$177.2 million each year. These are not one-time costs . . . , but ongoing operational costs that will be faced each year." This estimate is an increase over previous standardized testing costs, not the full cost of the testing.

The Pioneer Institute estimates that California's textbook and materials costs will be \$374 million. California's previous standards were judged to be as good as, if not better than, Common Core standards, so this is money that did not need to be spent.

Union Profs Continued from page 2)

saw him as complicit in efforts to undermine their job security if the MOOC that features his lectures was offered at SJSU. The letter continued, "Let's not kid ourselves; administrators at the [California State University system] are beginning a process of replacing faculty with cheap online education." The executive board of the San José State University chapter of the California Faculty Association union also issued a statement condemning the use of MOOCs. (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 05-02-13 & 05-09-13)

Duke University, American University, Amherst College, and Harvard University

are among campuses where professors are objecting to for-credit MOOCs, saying it curtails their academic freedom. Professors in the School of Engineering at San José State University approved the online lectures used there as a means to improve student learning. In a statement to The Chronicle of Higher Education, the provost and vice president of academic affairs at SJSU said, "our collaboration with edX does indeed locate the responsibility for the course solely with our faculty members, who will determine how much, or how little, of the edX course materials they will incorporate into their blended courses."

Many California taxpayers are left wondering why they will be paying for this.

It doesn't go unnoticed by Common Core critics that Bill Gates, who makes computers, Sir Michael Barber's Pearson PLC, the multinational publishing and education conglomerate, and other education industry giants who are champions of Common Core will profit handsomely from its implementation.

CC Predictions and Predicaments

Dr. Ze'ev Wurman, a mathematics standards and assessment expert and former U.S. Department of Education official, states:

I believe Common Core marks the cessation of educational standards improvement in the United States. No state has any reason left to aspire for first-rate standards, as all states will be judged by the same mediocre national benchmark enforced by the federal government.

Moreover, there are organizations that have reasons to work for lower and less-demanding standards, specifically teachers unions and professional teacher organizations. While they may not admit it, they have a vested interest in lowering the accountability bar for their members. With Common Core,

they have a single target to aim for, rather than 50 distributed ones. So give it some time and, as sunset follows sunrise, we will see even those mediocre standards being made less demanding. This will be done in the name of "critical thinking" and "21st-century" skills in faraway Washington, D.C., well beyond the reach of parents and most states and employees.

Christopher Tienken, Ed.D, the editor of the *Journal of Scholarship & Practice* in his article "An Example of Data-less Decision Making" (Winter 2011) offers another reason all Americans should worry about the potentially devastating impact of Common Core:

Children do not have a seat at the policy-making table. Policy is thrust upon them, not created with them. They are helpless to defend themselves against poor decision-making. They do not have a voice. They have only the voices of the adults who are supposed to know better.

Comic Books Continued from page 1)

ous literary work may have some validity in certain cases. But when comic books replace literature, a problem arises. In the following example reported in the *Chicago Tribune* article, the possible outcome of including graphic novels is apparent. At a presentation to the National Teachers of English conference, instructors of a senior Advanced Placement and honors course presented an argument against reading the real *Beowulf*, in favor of reading the comic book based on *Beowulf*.

Half the students spent nearly six hours on average reading the full traditional text. The other half, who

read a "Beowulf" graphic novel, spent about two hours. Both groups took the same 25-question multiple-choice test. Students who read the traditional text scored 81 percent on average compared with 75 percent for those who read the graphic novel.

The presenting educators wondered if the few points difference on the test were worth the extra time — "would that time be better spent doing other things?" This is exactly what worries some observers about graphic novels in the classroom — and about the increasing and myopic focus on testing to measure learning.

Yoga in Schools Continued from page 2)

Although some parents are unhappy about the yoga program, the district plans to expand it to all nine Encinitas schools. (National Public Radio, 01-09-2013)

It is disingenuous to argue that yoga is not deeply rooted in Eastern religious thought. Even pro-yoga books support this. Some also point to the dangers of practicing yoga. The emptying of the mind sought by a yogi is what allows him to free himself from worldly physical distractions. Emptying the mind is not a goal that, for example, a Christian would seek to achieve.

According to Georg Feuerstein, Ph.D., author of *The Yoga Tradition*, "Yoga is the union of the individual psyche with the transcendental Self." Speaking of psychiatrist Carl Jung, an article on Livestrong.com says, "He also opened the door for many conversations regarding what could be considered an enlightening religious experience and what might constitute a psychotic episode. He saw the two as closely related." (03-15-2011) Carl Jung studied yoga for two

decades. William J. Broad in *The Science of Yoga*, quotes Jung, saying, "Advanced yoga 'can let loose a flood of sufferings of which no sane person ever dreamed.'"

While those who object to yoga in the schools may not be worried about it creating psychotic episodes, it is not "uninformed" to recognize that further and better research should be done before yoga is promoted in schools because to date we don't know exactly what we are promoting.

In addition to spiritual questions about yoga, William J. Broad, the author of *The Science of Yoga*, says there is risk of injury and even stroke. He says, "Yoga at the start was an obscure cult steeped in magic and eroticism. At the end, it fixated on health and fitness." But he further claims, "Yoga does not promote weight loss. Rather, it reduces the metabolic rate of practitioners leading to fewer calories burned." Thus yoga will not combat childhood obesity and may even promote it, especially because time children spend doing yoga is taken away from other physical education activities such as sports and free play.

