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Next Generation Science Standards: Common Core Incognito

It took three years for a group of committees to develop Common Core Science Standards, which are called “Next Generation Science Standards” (NGSS). The National Research Council and Washington-based Achieve, the group that produced the Common Core English and math standards, also managed the development of Common Core science standards.

Those who decided to call Common Core (CC) Science standards “Next Generation Science Standards” may have done so to dissociate their work from Common Core. Common Core has gained a negative reputation and is increasingly associated with failure, as the public has learned what federalized standards actually mean to the future of math and English K-12 education in America.

CC science creators and proponents claim the standards were created by the states. They made the same untrue claim

about CC English and math standards. To give the science claim some credibility, 26 states were allowed some input into science standards. Each of those states “was required to form a broad-based group to review the standards, including

representatives of K-12 education and higher education, as well as of the science and business communities.” (*Education Week*, 5-14-12) The key word here is “review.” These state committees

gave feedback, but they did not develop the standards.

Stephen Pruitt, who managed the standards-development process for Achieve, indicated to *Education Week* that “the feedback from states has been taken very seriously, and many changes have been made to the draft document based upon it.” He added, “[T]he standards must remain true to the National Resource Council framework.”

The science standards, like those for

math and English, are not based on empirical evidence of efficacy nor are they tested in any environment. They are fresh out of the box and will be field-tested statewide in any state that signs on.

Climate Change and Evolution

Proponents of evolution and manmade climate change are ecstatic about the Common Core science standards. Climate change is accepted as manmade in the standards and children must accept this notion. “The standards make clear that evolution is fundamental to understanding the life sciences,” according to *Education Week*. This may present a roadblock to adopting these standards in some states.

As Steve Goreham explains in *The Mad, Mad, Mad World of Climatism*, some scientific evidence indicates that warming and cooling trends are naturally occurring as an earth cycle. He claims that scientists disagree about the extent to which man’s activities are a cause of climate change. NGSS teach that human activity is responsible for detrimental climate change and emphasize that action must be taken to “save the earth.”

The Myth about Curriculum

Although proponents emphasize that the Common Core standards are not a curriculum, standards and testing drive curriculum. States will be teaching to specific standards and teaching to a test. Curriculum developed will, of necessity, reflect those standards and that test.

Bill Gates, arguably the most influential proponent and definitely the largest financial contributor to Common Core, besides the federal government, said in a speech to the National Conference of State Legislators in July 2009: “Identifying common standards is not enough. We’ll know we’ve succeeded when the curriculum and the tests are aligned to these standards.”

The January 2013 UCLA-based National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing Common Core report concluded that “the assessments themselves and their results will send powerful signals to schools about the meaning of the [Common Core standards] and what students know and are able to do. If history is a guide, educators will align curriculum and teaching to what is tested, and what is not assessed largely will be ignored.”

Fordham Review

Nine scientists and mathematicians reviewed the content, rigor, and clarity of the NGSS for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Fordham gave the standards an overall grade of “C,” listing the following major problems with Common Core science standards:

1. The NGSS “never explicitly require some content in early grades that is then assumed in subsequent standards.”
2. The standards attempt “to put a ceiling on the content and skills that will be measured at each grade,” [which] may limit what is taught by the exclusion of content that more advanced students can learn.
3. The standards fail “to include essential math content that is critical to science learning.” Particularly in physics and chemistry, “the standards seem to assiduously dodge the mathematical demands inherent in the subjects covered.”
4. The “confusing presentation of the standards, combined with vague and poorly worded expectations, earns the NGSS a 1.5 out of 3 for clarity and specificity.”

Another problem Fordham reviewers found stems from the hands-on activities required by NGSS and the resulting focus on students “performing” at the expense of “memorizing.” The Fordham Institute suggests that the creators of the standards “conferred primacy on practices and paid

(See *Science Standards*, page 4)



Chicago After the Teachers Union Strike

The seven-day Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) strike last fall is long over, but fallout from it is ongoing. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) faces a \$1 billion budget deficit, partially fueled by teacher salary increases agreed to in order to end the strike. The district will close 50 schools, including about 10% of all elementary schools. The Chicago school closings are the largest in American history.

As a result of the school shutdowns, 663 employees will be laid off, including teachers, teaching assistants, and bus aides. Those to be laid off include 420 tenured teachers whose performance is rated satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The union contract allows teachers who are rated excellent or superior to be reassigned within the district (*Chicago Tribune*, 6-15-13).

Despite facing massive budget deficits, Mayor Rahm Emanuel gave CTU teachers salary increases in order to settle the strike. The union accepted raises of 17% for teachers, although they had asked for a 30% increase. Chicago teachers are among the highest paid in the nation.

Recently re-elected CTU union president Karen Lewis points to many reasons for Chicago’s failing schools, but the Chicago teachers union isn’t among them. Lewis was the less-radical candidate in the union election. A faction of the union was unhappy with Lewis, claiming that she failed to gain sufficient rewards to teachers

before ending the strike.

Lewis and the CTU have filed three lawsuits against the city of Chicago over



the school closings. The CTU claims that the closings are motivated by racial discrimination. The union also blames charter school proliferation for school closures,

although the popularity of charter schools is a direct result of traditional public schools’ failure to educate students. National Assessment of Educational Progress results show that in 2011, only about 20% of Chicago 4th-graders could do math at grade level and only about 18% were

(See *Chicago Union Strike*, page 4)

CSCOPE Secret Curriculum Killed in Texas

A controversial online curriculum used by more than 800 Texas School Districts was ditched by state lawmakers in May. Many wonder how CSCOPE statewide lesson plans, which were secret from parents and frequently controversial, came to be taught in Texas schools. Teachers relied on the curriculum for seven years.

CSCOPE was designed and marketed by State Education Service Centers, a nonprofit organization that sold the copyrighted curriculum to school districts. (CSCOPE is not an acronym, just a made-up term.) The curriculum and lesson plans were used to teach math, reading, science,

and social studies. CSCOPE strictly organized each day’s classroom topics and provided scripted talking points for teachers.

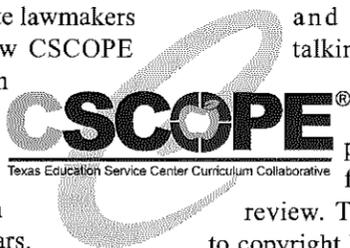
In violation of state law, lesson plans were not available for parental or public review. This was allegedly due to copyright laws. Unlike the use of textbooks that parents can monitor, online content can remain secret. Parents were outraged when their children told them about some of the lessons taught. The tipping point came when Texans saw photos of schoolchildren wearing burkas and other traditional Islamic clothing.

Many teachers are pleased to see

the end of CSCOPE, although it means developing alternative curriculum. One teacher told KLTV, “The need for college remedial courses will drop dramatically as CSCOPE lesson plans are removed.” (5-20-13) Many believe CSCOPE diluted student learning in favor of politically motivated activities and stifled teachers’ flexibility in classrooms.

Teachers were required to sign a nine-page nondisclosure form that prohibited them from discussing CSCOPE. Some teachers did speak out against the lesson plans, even resorting to leaking content and complaining at online chat rooms. One math teacher with a doctorate resigned after 40 years of teaching

(See *CSCOPE*, page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

The Supreme Court decided in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* that the Fifth Circuit Court must reexamine its earlier ruling that race may be used as one part of a holistic assessment used in the admission process. The lower court must affirm that racial consideration is necessary to obtain a diverse student body.

Teachers unions are pleased that Education Secretary Arne Duncan decided in mid-June that states have permission to ignore restrictions he previously put on No Child Left Behind waivers, including tying teacher evaluations to standardized tests. Sen. Lamar Alexander, who accused the Democrats of attempting to create a national school board, said, "If anyone is looking for further proof that our education system is congested with federal mandates, the education secretary is now granting waivers from waivers." (EAGNews.org, 6-19-13)

Contrary to requirements of Common Core, which mandate keyboarding but not cursive writing, neuroscience is finding that handwriting is important to a child's overall intelligence. "In the case of learning cursive writing, the brain develops functional specialization that integrates both sensation, movement control, and thinking. Brain imaging studies reveal that multiple areas of the brain become co-activated during learning of cursive writing of pseudo-letters, as opposed to typing or just visual practice." (*Psychology Today*, 3-14-13)

Three North Carolina state senators are trying to force the University of North Carolina (UNC) to halt gender-neutral housing on campus, which is supposed to ease anxiety over living arrangements for lesbian, gay, and transgender students. According to one of the senators, "The purpose of [Senate Bill 658] is to help the UNC system regain its focus on the core mission of educating young people and helping them find meaningful employment in our state. UNC did not become a national leader in academics by wasting time and tax dollars on frivolous social experiments."

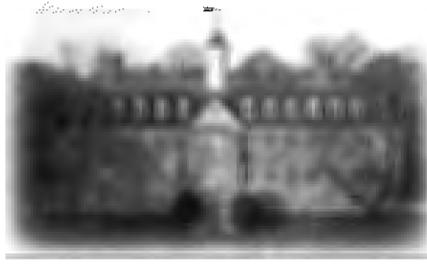
(See Briefs, page 3)

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Virginia Enacts Equal Tolerance Law

In March, Virginia passed a law protecting religious pluralism at state colleges. The *Student Group Protection Act* will protect religious and political groups on campus from the "all comers" policy that can negatively impact student groups. Virginia legislators determined that public colleges may not withhold funds from religious or political student groups that don't accept all individuals wishing to join. The law effectively ensures freedom of association on Virginia public university campuses, allowing religious or political student organizations the right to define their doctrines and limit membership to those students committed to their missions.



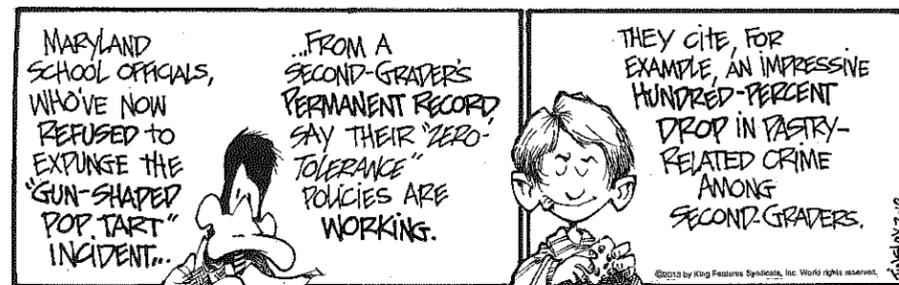
Thirteen religious organizations were forced to leave campus and lost funding at Vanderbilt University, a private Tennessee institution, when the school said that anyone who wishes to join or lead a group must be allowed to do so, even when the member's intent is to destroy the organization. The official Vanderbilt policy states: "Registered student organizations must be open to

all students as members and must permit all members in good standing to seek leadership posts." Vanderbilt fraternities and sororities are exempt from the rule and can still choose their membership. Critics of the Vanderbilt policy say that although it claims to protect "diversity," it actually only protects diversity that falls into certain categories. Some call this intolerance.

At The College of William and Mary in Virginia, an opinion piece in *The Flat Hat* student newspaper stated, "Before you accuse [Governor] McDonnell of antiquated policies and unconstitutional discrimination, take a look at the law itself." The student author wrote, "Clubs and groups discriminate on some level, intentionally or not, all the time. Now religious and political groups can, too." (4-1-13)

The president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) stated, "Guaranteeing those groups the right to hold their leaders to belief-based standards is a vital part of ensuring that a pluralistic and diverse culture can exist on campus."

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Science or Terrorism?

In April, a Polk County, Florida high school student, whose science experiment caused a water bottle to explode, was expelled from school, arrested, and faced charges of "felony possession of a weapon and making or discharging a destructive device."

While preparing for the science fair, Kiera Wilmot, 16, combined toilet bowl cleaner and aluminum foil in a plastic bottle at an outside location on campus before school. The sound of the "explosion" was described as "like a firecracker," and the only damage done was that the bottle lid came off and there was a puff of smoke. No one was injured.

Authorities apparently could not discern the difference between a budding scientist and a budding terrorist. Kiera was taken away in handcuffs and she could have faced 20 years in jail. Resolution came via an "offer of diversion of prosecution." Although the document signed by Kiera and prosecutors remains sealed, such agreements usually involve

probation and community service. (*Orlando Sentinel*, 5-15-13)

After a ten-day suspension, the school district forced Kiera to attend an alternative school in order to graduate next year. The incident led to some tense times for the student, who plays cello and wants to study robotics in college. She said she feared fellow students would think she was a terrorist. (*Orlando Sentinel*, 05-14-13)

Numerous scientists and scientific journals protested the school's treatment of Kiera, as they "[rallied] behind her inquisitiveness." Many scientists told of their own experiments gone awry and how they were shaped by the thrill of adventurous science. (*Scientific American*, 5-03-13)

Book of the Month



Exiled: Stories from Conservative and Moderate Professors Who Have Been Ridiculed, Ostracized, Marginalized, Frozen Out, Edited by Mary Grabar, Ph.D., Dissident Prof Press, 2013, \$12.00.



Professors who do not promote the liberal agenda prevalent on many college campuses face discrimination from educators and administrators who seem to be tolerant of most everything, except individuality. In *Exiled* Mary Grabar presents seven professors, herself included, who have been "exiled" from higher education to varying degrees. Some of them are currently employed, some are perpetual adjuncts, and some are looking for work. All have been discriminated against because they espouse ideas that vary from the prevailing leftist agenda.

Exiled contributor M. D. Allen says the proliferation of radical thought on campus is "the result of a decades-long power-grab on the part of the academic Left." Prof. Allen relates chilling tales of attacks on his free speech rights, both spontaneous and orchestrated. He says, "There are so few conservatives teaching in higher education first because they are relentlessly kept out and secondly because if by a miracle one does get tenure he is treated like dirt."

Professor Martin Slann admits he was a lifelong Democrat, until after the 2000 election when he realized he had become a "raving moderate." Slann was alarmed by the party's move to the left. His conviction that "there is no hope of ever making Islam and Sharia [law] compatible with political democracy" continues to ruffle feathers at the University of Texas. Although Slann is "socially exiled" on campus and at conferences, he is sustained by having the opportunity to teach hundreds of students a year what he believes to be the truth.

Pointing to diversity as "a kind of idol at the modern university," Prof. Paul Kengor says what is often missing on campus is "intellectual diversity." He claims it's not necessarily that professors are Marxists, but that they are repulsed by anti-communists. This results in students who aren't taught about the evils of communism, both ideologically and historically.

The ratio of conservative and moderate professors to liberal professors is changing quickly. Less radical professors are retiring and even somewhat conservative hopefuls are not being granted interviews. Those in charge of hiring review a candidate's CV, see that the candidate's dissertation does not cover the preferred subject matter, and the candidate is rejected. Most new hires adhere to a radical agenda. The progressive stranglehold and lack of intellectual balance on campus is anathema to well-educated graduates.

FOCUS: Federal Fig Leaf or Flexibility?

by: Theodor Rebarber

Originally published by the Pioneer Institute on May 29, 2013 and reprinted with permission.

As the fight over the national Common Core academic standards continues to heat up in the states, it's worth taking another look at the Obama Administration's claim that they are absolutely, positively not using federal power to coerce states into adopting the Common Core. For those who haven't been following the ins and outs of this particular federal soap opera, states are now in the position of pleading with federal officials for waivers from unworkable provisions in federal law. In 2002, Congress and the Bush Administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which mandated that by the spring of 2014 (next year!) fully 100% of all public school students in America must meet grade level standards in English and Mathematics. This includes 100% of special immigrant students, 100% of brand new immigrant students who don't speak a word of English, and 100% of all other students.

Now, some might wonder, what kind of educational reasoning could possibly have gone into establishing such a policy? The unfortunate answer is that the politicians in Congress who passed NCLB — most of which had never previously had to make such educational decisions

— weren't relying on *educational* logic but on *political* logic. Should any future candidate or constituency be able to criticize them for aiming at anything less than EVERY student meeting grade level standards, especially if failing students might be disproportionately minorities, lower income, or those with special needs? But NCLB didn't just establish the 100% passing goal as a worthy aspiration, it was mandated as policy, with those states and schools not meeting the goal to be shamed publicly as failures and subject to sanctions and consequences.

With the Bush Administration gone, and the unachievable 100% standard closing steadily, the Obama Administration announced in its first term that states hoping for a waiver from this or other provisions of NCLB could obtain one if they would adopt the Common Core standards in English and Mathematics. This appeared to some — OK, to many — like the feds misusing a waiver provision designed to provide greater flexibility for states to, instead, impose national curriculum standards that were never authorized by Congress (or, in fact, prohibited by Congress). *Mais non!*, insists President Obama's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, this is all a big misunderstanding — a myth, in fact — because states are unfettered to choose "Option B," college and career readiness standards different than the Common Core standards.

For those unwilling to simply accept the good word of the Obama Administration, however, a review of materials on the U.S. Department of Education's webpage on NCLB waivers indicates that out of 37 state waivers approved so far, two have gone to states that didn't adopt the Common Core Standards in English and Mathematics: Alaska and Virginia.

Exhibit A for the Administration's claim that the waivers aren't being used to impose a national curriculum, Alaska's 820-page (!) approved waiver submission, documents to the satisfaction of federal officials that the state has met all of their requirements. Revealingly, an included analysis of alignment between the Alaska standards and Common Core (pp. 346-7) concludes that, though "Alaska has chosen different wording and examples for certain standards," the final revised Alaska standards "align *very closely* with the Common Core" (emphasis added). Examples are included of how this impressive degree of alignment was achieved, including state standards that were modified to fit Common Core and Common Core standards adopted in their entirety. Perhaps not coincidentally, the DC-based Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), a key author of the

Common Core standards, was selected to perform the alignment analysis and confer its blessing on the state's standards.

Exhibit B, Virginia's comparatively brief 202-page approved initial waiver submission, states on p. 14 that one of the state's accomplishments is "... the adoption of revised

content standards that reflect national and international college- and career-ready expectations in mathematics and reading and are *fully aligned* with the Common Core State Standards" (emphasis added). The approved state submission goes on to cite extensive analyses of alignment between Virginia's standards and the Common Core as well as resulting modifications and supplementary standards added based on Common Core (pp. 18-19). For Mathematics, a live link is included within the application providing federal reviewers access to a document detailing line-by-line additions to the state's standards to bring them into alignment with the Common Core. For English, the application describes how Common Core was incorporated directly at the time of the state's revision of its standards to ensure alignment.

Under previous federal Administrations, states were required by federal law only to vouch to the U.S. Department of Education that they had adopted student academic standards. Today, under an unchanged federal law, states that don't officially adopt Common Core provide documentation to federal officials of modifications to their standards to ensure that they are "very closely" or "fully" aligned to the Common Core. So, are states free to adopt academic standards that are meaningfully different from Common Core, or is "Option B" just a fig leaf for federal control? One of the states which has not yet obtained a federal waiver from NCLB is Texas, which has created its own rigorous academic standards. Will Texas, under federalism champion Governor Rick Perry, meekly accept federal authority over its academic standards?

Theodor Rebarber is CEO of AccountabilityWorks, a nonprofit organization. His several decades in education have included the private sector, the federal government, and the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies (VIPPS).

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Parents of students at New York Prep, a private high school costing over \$40,000 a year, have concerns about a former public school teacher who assigned students to write suicide notes. The English homework assignment was in conjunction with reading *The Secret Life of Bees*. Students as young as 14 wrote from the point of view of a character who commits suicide, explaining their motives and "justifying why they had committed suicide." (*New York Post*, 6-12-13)

Obama's ConnectED Taxes Americans

President Obama announced increased taxes on Americans on June 6, while visiting a North Carolina high school. The White House website suggests the new education initiative, ConnectED, "will connect 99% of America's students to the internet through high-speed broadband and wireless within the next five years." In order to fulfill Obama's wish, the FCC will need to collect additional revenue. Administration officials suggest a "temporary" yearly surcharge on phone bills. Critics of adding more taxes to every American's phone bill wonder when any *temporary* increase has been reversed.

Education Secretary Arne Duncan calls ConnectED "a win for students, a win for teachers, and ultimately a win for education for our country." Some see ConnectED not as a win for education, but instead as a sneaky way to raise taxes to pay for Common Core computerized testing, without the need for Congressional approval.

The ConnectED Initiative will be paid for by using the Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate

program, which is found on phone bills under the heading "Universal Service Fund." Both phone service providers and the FCC have been accused of misusing this tax, which was originally meant to ensure internet access to rural and low-income communities.

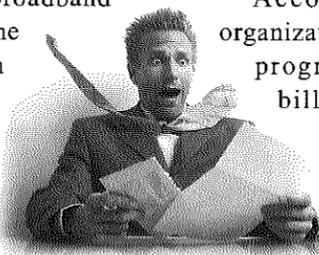
According to the watchdog organization ProPublica, the E-Rate program has supplied "\$2.25 billion to subsidize telecom and Internet services for America's schoolchildren and library users" since its introduction. ProPublica states, "Numerous reports by Congress, the GAO and the FCC's inspector general have criticized the E-Rate program over such issues as waste, fraud, [and] poor management. . . ." The organization claims providers have overcharged schools, sometimes by as much as 325%. (ProPublica.org, 5-01-12)

Critics of ConnectED suspect that rather than correcting deficiencies in school districts' needs, the current quest for greater connectivity is aimed at enabling Common Core nationalized

testing. Each student needs a computer and online access to take the eight to ten hours of math and English testing necessitated by Common Core. Some schools will need increased broadband width in order for all students to be online at once to complete the national tests. The increased internet capacity may also be necessary to funnel the personal tracking data that will be collected on each student and supplied to states, the federal government, and other "stakeholders." (Stakeholders include private companies.)

The White House claims that "fewer than 20% of educators across the country say their school's Internet connection meets their teaching needs." (WhiteHouse.gov, 6-06-13) But a survey by the Software and Information Industry Association tells

a different story. In that survey, 89% of responding teachers and administrators in K-12 schools gave the highest or second highest ranking to the statement: "High Speed broadband access is available for robust communication, administrative, and instructional needs." Only 11% answered the query with the lowest two rankings. (*Education Week Technology Counts*, 3-14-13)



Science Standards Continued from page 1)

too little attention to the knowledge base that makes those practices both feasible and worthwhile.” They indicate that in this case “content takes a backseat to practices.” The Fordham report suggests that science education should “build knowledge first so that students will have the storehouse of information and understanding that they need to engage in scientific reasoning and higher level thinking.” NGSS are heavy on practice and light on content.

The Fordham Institute concludes that while 16 states have existing standards that are inferior to the Next Generation Science Standards, in another 22 states the difference was “too close to call,” and that existing standards in 12 states and D.C. are superior. Fordham suggests that states desiring to improve their science standards forgo Common Core and instead look to states with superior standards.

There are also National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) standards already in place that are superior to CC science standards and that could be used as guidelines by states. NAEP and TIMSS standards received the grade of A- from the Fordham Institute.

Despite criticism of the NGSS, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute remains an enthusiastic proponent of math and English Common Core standards.

College-Ready?

As with the math and English CC standards, what is meant by “college-ready” is misleading. While the CC science standards may prepare students for an undergraduate general science class, they will not prepare them for further study in STEM subjects. According to the Fordham analysis, “there is so little advanced content that it would be impossible to derive a high school physics or chemistry course from the content included in the NGSS.” Fordham reviewers say that what NGSS offers amounts to “watered-down versions of heretofore more demanding courses in key STEM subjects,” such as chemistry and physics. Many colleges require completion of high school chemistry or physics for admission. A watered-down version will not only cheat students, but will result in the need for more remedial college courses.

The Next Generation Science Standards again indicate that in the world of Common Core, ‘college-ready’ means to graduate students who are only prepared for further studies at a non-selective institution or a two-year community college. Common Core does not prepare students for a four-year college. NGSS will not prepare students for study in a STEM subject.

Align or Decline?

The Kansas State Board of Education has already chosen to align with the Common Core science standards. Ken Willard, one of two board members who voted against alignment, said, “both evolution and human-caused climate change are presented in these standards dogmatically.” He continued, “This nonobjective, unscientific approach to education standards amounts to little more than indoctrination in political correctness.”

Kansas state Rep. Allan Rothlisberg said that Common Core represents federal intrusion. Alluding to the recently discovered, politically motivated targeting of individuals and groups by the IRS, he said, “Why on Earth would we expect the Department of Education — which is not constitutionally authorized — to look out for our children? That’s our responsibility.” (*Lawrence Journal-World*, 6-11-13)

Matt Krehbiel, a science education consultant for the Kansas Department of Education, who participated in the development of the CC science standards, “criticized the Fordham report as using a flawed

approach to evaluate the standards, and said the new standards are worthy of embrace for Kansas.” (*Education Week*, 6-13-13)

Rhode Island and Vermont have adopted the standards. Although the Kentucky and Maryland boards of education have approved the CC science standards, a legislative review is needed before they can take effect in those states.

More states will soon choose to adopt or decline the science standards. Those



states choosing to align with CC science will then face the expense of aligned textbooks, teacher training, and the cost of developing testing. Common Core math and English testing was initially funded by federal stimulus money, but nationalized testing in science has received no such funding.

Chicago Union Strike Continued from page 1)

reading at grade level.

Lewis said in a June 18 speech to the City Club of Chicago, “Rich, white people think they know what’s in the best interest of children of African Americans and Latinos — no matter what the parent’s income or education level.” According to Lewis, the antidote to poor education in Chicago is: progressive taxation; ending corporate tax subsidies and loopholes; higher property taxes; and enactment of a financial transactions tax and a commuter tax (*Chicago Tribune*, 6-19-13).

Commenting on Lewis’s City Club speech, the Education Action Group (EAG) wrote:

Some audience members must have been wondering if they were listening to the same union leader who, last September, led a teachers strike that forced the nearly bankrupt school district into doling out roughly \$220 million in pay raises.

That money will have to come from somewhere else in CPS’s budget — probably student programs and activities. That means Lewis’s greedy CTU deserves some blame for the district’s woes.

But Lewis doesn’t want anybody to focus on that, which is why she played the race card during Tuesday’s speech.

And that’s why Lewis has a long list of excuses for CPS’s failures. As long as taxpayers are distracted by these minor issues (or nonissues), they won’t turn their attention to how Lewis’s union is destroying their neighborhood schools.

On May 3 the Chicago Democratic Socialists of America honored the Chicago Teachers Union by giving them an award. It stated, “In appreciation of its recent victories and in anticipation of more to come. . . .” The socialists said the union had “shown that organizing is more than just mobilization and that ‘defending a public good requires an organized public’. . . .” CTU Vice President Jesse Sharkey accepted the award at the political group’s annual awards dinner.

Besides layoffs at the under-enrolled schools, even more employees will lose their jobs at five underperforming Chicago schools that are “turnarounds.” At turnaround schools, all employees are laid off and new staff is hired in an effort to correct previous performance failures.

An additional challenge faced by CPS is overcrowding at a few successful schools in the district. Families seek out these schools in order to ensure an adequate education for their children.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel blames the CPS closings on underperforming schools and declining enrollment, estimated to equal 145,000 students in the last decade. The dismal performance of city schools has resulted in families moving to the suburbs. The mayor says the result of closings will be that more students are in better schools.

Minorities make up 91% of all CPS students. Schools are most likely to close in neighborhoods where the recession has hit hardest. Lack of jobs, “foreclosure-induced empty homes,” and rising crime have “driven out many middle class families, and their school-aged kids have gone with them.” (CNN.com, 6-11-13)

Chicago politicians actively campaigned for schools in their own wards to remain open. Alderman Walter Burnett

claimed closing one of two schools involved in a “decades-long gang rivalry between families at the two schools” would lead to violence. Alderman Carrie Austin was “concerned about Songhai Elementary being absorbed into Curtis Elementary because the two schools have a long history of feuding and violence.” She suggested that district officials “see it out of the eyes of safety, and not education.”

Closings are estimated to save the district \$867 million in capital and operating expenses over the next ten years. Alderman Fioretti said, “This was a pivotal moment in the future of this city. [The Chicago Board of Education vote to close schools] will have a financial and psychological impact that will be devastating to our communities.” Union Pres. Lewis said, “Closing schools is not an education plan. It is a scorched earth policy.” (*Chicago Tribune*, 5-22-13) The union threatens increased public protests in opposition to the school closures.

CSCOPE Continued from page 1)

rather than use the CSCOPE material. He claimed that CSCOPE lessons “guttled a quarter of a typical [Algebra I] book’s content.” (*Times Record News*, 12-16-12)

After parents saw the alarming photos of high school students in Muslim garb posted on Facebook, a district spokesman explained, “The lesson encompassed diversity, understanding so students receive a firm understanding of our world and why people are motivated differently.” There was no concurrent study of Christian or Jewish motivations in the social studies class or the CSCOPE curriculum. (Fox News, 2-25-13)

Another lesson plan equated the pre-Revolutionary War event commonly called the Boston Tea Party with terrorist attacks carried out by Muslim extremists, like those on Sept. 11, 2001. Although CSCOPE officials tried to distance themselves from this lesson, calling it “optional” and “discontinued,” the following narrative, which uses the word “terrorist” three times, was given to students who were afterwards told it described the Boston Tea Party:

A local militia, believed to be a terrorist organization, attacked the property of private citizens today at our nation’s busiest port. Although no one was injured in the attack,

a large quantity of merchandise, considered to be valuable to its owners and loathsome to the perpetrators, was destroyed. The terrorists, dressed in disguise and apparently intoxicated, were able to escape into the night with the help of local citizens who harbored these fugitives and concealed their identities from the authorities. It is believed that the terrorist attack was a response to the policies enacted by the occupying country’s government.

Some in Texas are calling for a review of the operation and intent of Education Service Centers. The legislative action halted an investigation into CSCOPE curriculum that some feel should continue.

CSCOPE will remain an active online guide to Texas state-required K-12 skills, and includes a calendar showing when particular skills should be introduced. Only the curriculum aspect is discontinued.

Use of CSCOPE curriculum in schools sounds an alarm for parents to remain vigilant about what their children are being taught. Texas students were exposed to CSCOPE curriculum for years before outraged parents and citizens forced lawmakers to act.