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One Man's Money: Bill Gates, Education, and Common Core

Bill Gates wrote in *USA Today* on February 12, 2014: "we're in the grip of mythology." He claims that the "myths" surrounding Common Core standards are "harmful, because they can lead people to fight against the best solutions to our biggest problems." Bill Gates is the chief funder — besides the federal government — and one of the most adamant proponents of Common Core standards. Questions to be asked are: "Best solutions according to whom?" and "Where is the proof?"

Gates's *USA Today* article glosses over controversial aspects of Common Core and gives simplistic responses to troubling parts of the standards. Common Core was developed at the behest of two

private Washington, D.C. lobbying organizations, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Gates doesn't address concerns that Achieve, Inc., the group that the NGA and the CCSSO assigned to develop the standards, did not include educators or child development specialists; that development was done behind closed doors; that the standards adopted in most states of the nation were never piloted, anywhere, by anyone; and that the federal government requires personally identifiable student information from schools as an integral part of Common Core.

Life in a Wealthy, Progressive Family

Bill Gates is a successful man, if

success is measured by computer genius and the ability to amass a fortune. But Gates is not an expert on and has no formal training in child development or education. Born William H. Gates III into a wealthy and prominent Seattle family, "Bill" attended an exclusive private school and enrolled at Harvard in the fall of 1973. He took a leave of absence during his junior year and never completed his college education.

Gates comes from a progressive, liberal family background. He told Bill Moyers in a 2003 interview:

When I was growing up, my parents were always involved in various volunteer things. My dad was head



of Planned Parenthood. And it was very controversial to be involved with that. And so it's fascinating. At the dinner table my parents [were] very good at sharing the things that they were doing. And almost treating us like adults. . . .

Speaking about "philanthropic things," Gates told Moyers, "I have to say I got off the track when I started Microsoft." (PBS.org, 5-9-2003) Largely due to family influence, Gates got back on track with philanthropy once his fortune was established.

Why \$2.3 Billion, Bill?

Experts commonly agree that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has granted over \$2 billion to Common Core development and implementation. Recent research by Jack Hassard, Professor Emeritus at Georgia State University, indicates that the Gateses have to date spent \$2.3 billion on Common Core. (TruthInAmericanEducation.com, 3-18-14) The Gates Foundation is the nation's richest charity. In 2011, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that in the previous ten years the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation had "poured some \$5 billion into education grants and scholarships." (7-23-11)

Why did Bill Gates turn his attention to education? Why has he spent so much cash to force Common Core upon the nation? Questions and theories abound but answers do not. \$2.3 billion is a large commitment and Gates is certainly not turning his back on Common Core now. He will continue to spend until his goals are achieved.

"Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives," according to the foundation's website. They "take on some tough challenges: extreme poverty and poor health in developing countries, and the failures of America's education system." They admit, "Some of the projects we fund will fail. We not only accept that, we expect it. . . ." (GatesFoundation.org)

Some say Gates is "a promoter of global sameness of education as defined by UNESCO and the United Nations." (WhatIsCommonCore.wordpress.com, 3-28-13) Gates is certainly active within the United Nations and has expressed agreement with UN policies that many Americans oppose. Agenda 21 is a UN-sponsored action plan

(See *One Man's Money*, page 4)

Local or Federal Lunch Standards?

At Uintah Elementary School in Salt Lake City, as many as 40 children had their school lunches thrown in the garbage by cafeteria employees.

The students were only allowed to have a carton of milk and a piece of fruit. The district child-nutrition manager participated in throwing away lunches of students whose parents allegedly were behind on paying student lunch accounts.

(Salt Lake Tribune, 1-29-14)

A spokesman for the Salt Lake School District said, "This was a mistake. There shouldn't have been food taken away from these students once they went through that line." (NBC News, 1-30-14)

Parents whose children had their lunches snatched say that they had not been notified that their account was in arrears and several also claim that their accounts were paid in full.

After learning about the Utah incident, a Houston, Texas man paid \$465 in unpaid lunch balances for 60 students at the school where he works as a tutor and mentor. When Kenny Thompson found that some students were eating cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches instead of full trays of food due to

negative balances on their lunch accounts, he brought accounts current. He said, "These are elementary school kids. They don't need to be worried about finances. They need to be worried about what grade they got in spelling." (*USA Today*, 2-7-14)

The chief executive officer of the School Nutrition Association, Patricia Montague, writing about the Utah incident in *Education Week*, claims that strategies for clearing unpaid lunch balances, the choice to offer free cold lunches, and other cafeteria policies are left up to "local discretion," resulting in "a patchwork of complex policies

... implemented across the nation." She continues, "It's no wonder that parents, administrators, and even cafeteria employees get confused." (*Education Week*, 3-5-14) But the cafeteria workers in Utah weren't confused. They suffered from a lack of common sense and compassion.

Montague goes on to state that the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, the school lunch project widely promoted by Michelle Obama, requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture "to examine current policies and practices pertaining to unpaid meal charges and report on the feasibility of establishing national standards on meal charges and alternate meals." But, do we actually need more "national standards" in schools?

The number of students receiving free and reduced-fee lunches, as well as breakfast, and sometimes dinner, at school is already staggering. Harvard

(See *Federal Lunch Standards*, page 4)

Math As Indoctrination

From January 17-19, 2014, self-described "social justice educators" held a conference at University High School in Los Angeles. They called their sixth annual conference "Creating Balance in an Unjust World." The keynote speaker was Jane Margolis, a U.C.L.A. senior researcher who "studies disparities in learning opportunities that fall according to race, gender, and socio-economics." (CreatingBalanceConference.org)

Those who believe education should equal indoctrination often utilize subjects like history, English, and social studies. But a subset of educators choose math as a way to teach students "social justice" education. Social justice is a part of socialist doctrine, wherein corrective or distributive justice ensures a "fair" distribution of wealth. Rather than actual equal opportunity, social justice proponents insist on equal outcomes, regardless of personal effort, to

ensure that all citizens receive what is "due from society."

According to the 2006 United Nations document, *Social Justice in an Open World*: "Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth . . . and redress of injustices" (real or perceived). This is actually re-distribution of wealth because what is given is inevitably taken from other individuals.

Social Justice educators see the world, and particularly the United States, as an "unfair" place where subsets of people divided by race, gender, language, sexual preferences, etc. are treated unfairly and must be catered to in order to restore what they want: something for nothing. This gives unfair perks to those who fall into certain categories, thereby penalizing the rest of society.



Conference Schedule

On Friday, conference attendees visited schools to see social justice education in action. On Saturday and Sunday, conference participants attended workshops featuring lesson plans that educators could take back to their schools.

Conference workshop sessions, which lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes each, included the following:

- That's not fair!: Teaching Fractions to Preschoolers Through Fairness and Justice
- Teaching Elementary Students

(See *Math*, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

Indiana is the first state to reverse its decision to use Common Core standards, but drafts of the replacement standards are disappointing. Dr. Sandra Stotsky, creator of the excellent (former) Massachusetts standards, finds that more than 70% of Indiana's revised 6th- to 12th-grade standards in English "come directly from Common Core," while 20% are "edited versions of Common Core." Stotsky, who was hired by Indiana Gov. Mike Pence to review the standards, claims that the governor stands to be "embarrassed by his own Department of Education if the final version is too close to Common Core." (Fox News, 3-25-14)

Facebook, the popular social networking site, has new options for those who don't wish to identify as male or female. Users may opt for androgynous, bi-gender, intersex, gender fluid, transsexual, gender questioning, or another of the 50 possibilities chosen by Facebook "after consulting with leading gay and transgender activists." Reaction was mostly favorable at the site's diversity website, although some users say further steps should be taken to replace relationship terms like "son" and "daughter" and others want "sexual orientation options." According to the Associated Press, "there was no debate within Facebook about the social implications at all." The director of Facebook growth said, "It was simple: Not allowing people to express something so fundamental is not really cool, so we did something." (AP, 2-13-14)

Two sisters holding anti-abortion signs in the free-speech zone at the University of California-Santa Barbara were approached by a feminist professor who grabbed one of their signs and walked away with it. When the sisters followed and attempted to retrieve the sign, the professor allegedly scratched and kicked one of the girls. Feminist Studies professor Mireille Miller-Young, who specializes in "black cultural studies, pornography, and sex work," was charged with theft, battery, and vandalism. (TheCollegeFix.com, 3-12-14)

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Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>
E-mail: education@eagleforum.org

When Abstinence Doesn't Mean Abstinence

Parents in Shawnee, Kansas were disturbed when students at Hocker Grove Middle School were shown a sexually explicit poster in a "health" class that is supposedly "abstinence-based." One father thought that the poster his daughter photographed to show him must have been some sort of "student prank." Unfortunately, the school principal informed him that the poster is part of school curriculum. The poster, among other things, "oral sex," "anal sex," "grinding," and "sexual fantasy."



A district spokeswoman said:

The poster that you reference is actually part of our middle school health and science materials, and so it is a part of our district approved curriculum. However, the item is meant to be part of a lesson, and so certainly as a stand-alone poster without the context of a teacher-led discussion, I could see that there might be some cause for concern.

According to Fox News, the spokeswoman says the poster needs to be viewed in the "context of a bigger curriculum, which she calls abstinence-based for students in middle school. She said that the approved curriculum is in line with what other schools around the country do as well." (1-14-14)

Unfortunately, the poster is in line with sex education in the rest of the country. Many programs, especially those associated with the Planned Parenthood advocacy network claim to be "abstinence-based" but actually serve as an introduction to sex and foreplay.

When parents receive information about intended school-based health and sex education programs that claim to teach children abstinence, most are pleased. What program consent forms fail to tell parents is, that for most programs, abstinence means "abstinence until students change their minds." There is no concept of abstinence until marriage (or even another sort of commitment) taught in most sex education programs.

Abstinence Until Marriage

The Heritage Keepers sex education curriculum teaches abstinence in a way that "helps students see the benefits of marriage and why it is important to delay sex and form healthy families." It is the first abstinence-until-marriage program in the nation to be recognized on the current federal teen pregnancy prevention program list and identified by the Dept. of Health and Human Services as effective. It receives grants amounting to about \$500,000 a year. In contrast, according to Planned Parenthood's Annual Report, that organization operated on \$1.21 billion in the fiscal year ending June of 2013; \$540.6 million of that was provided to

Planned Parenthood by taxpayer-funded government health services grants.

Planned Parenthood promotes sex as pleasure, not as part of a committed marital relationship. Some say this is to keep themselves in the (profitable) business of abortion, teen pregnancy, and birth control for teens. (LifeNews.com, 1-19-14) Others say Planned Parenthood seeks to destroy traditional families.

Heritage Keepers is one of only 31 program models that "met effectiveness criteria in the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services pregnancy prevention research review of more than 1,000 studies. These are programs that were found to be effective at preventing teen pregnancies or births, reducing sexually transmitted infections, or reducing rates of associated sexual risk behaviors. . . ." (HHS.OfficeofAdolescentServices.gov) Heritage Keepers is also the only program out of 31 programs listed that complies with the Congressional definition of abstinence education.

Independent third-party research proves that a year after completing Heritage Keepers, students participating in the program initiated sex at a rate 67% lower than students not receiving the program. Heritage Keepers offers sex education materials that help children become adults who will respect sex as an integral part of marriage. (See book review in this issue.)

Obama's Sex Ed Budget

President Obama's proposed 2015 budget, released in March of 2014, calls for a five-year reauthorization of the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) sex education program at \$75 million a year, funded by the Affordable Care Act of 2010, otherwise known as Obamacare. Obama also requests \$105 million for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative (TPPI) sex education funding. Both PREP and TPPI claim to be abstinence-based sex education, but both programs promote sex, contraception, and abortion to students.

The Obama administration's 2015 budget asks Congress to eliminate funding for Abstinence Education programs. This is no surprise because President Obama doesn't believe in abstinence-based sex education, which focuses on the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by delaying initiation of sexual activity and engaging in healthy relationships.

"SIECUS applauds the [Obama] administration's commitment to improving the sexual health and well-being of young people and looks forward to working with Congress to continue these investments." (SIECUS.org, 3-4-14) SIECUS is the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S., which "seeks to promote the institutionalization of comprehensive sexuality education in public schools."

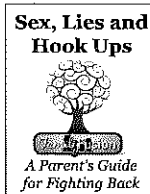
MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Book of the Month



Sex, Lies, and Hook Ups: A Parent's Guide for Fighting Back, Sally B. Raymond, et al., Heritage Community Services, 2012, \$34.95.



Sex, Lies, and Hook Ups is written by Heritage Keepers, an organization that has taught more than 250,000 young people about healthy family formation by focusing on abstaining from sex outside of marriage and other risky behaviors. This proven-effective program empowers children and families by focusing on positive character traits and making children aware of their value as individuals.

Most sex education programs have given up on young people and assume that even young teens will have sex; what ends up being taught is a guide to *supposedly* "safe sex" that often outright encourages risky behaviors.

Not so for Heritage Keepers. The organization and this book present arguments for marriage: why young people should strive to become married and reasons to avoid sex before matrimony. It coaches parents to establish "protective standards" while giving teens "the skills to avoid risk in order to help them reach their potential" by making the right choices.

The book includes full anatomy lessons, but refrains from becoming a "how to" manual. It can be used by families who opt out of school-based sex education and by homeschool families. Groups can contact Heritage Community Services in Charleston, South Carolina to have the program taught at a school, church, or other location.

Heritage Keepers says parents are the strongest influence on their children, despite how hard some insist that children rely mostly on peer pressure. Providing parental guidance is not just a conversation about sex, but a matter of continuous "one-on-one conversations," which are the backbone of strong relationships. It means teaching values, expectations, and family belief systems. The authors provide talking points to start frank conversations and keep them going.

Parents who read this book will better understand the biological effects caused by lust and infatuation, the ensuing effects of dopamine and serotonin on the brain, and how brain chemistry influences decision-making. Teens will learn to identify actual love, which is a "deep and lasting interest in the other person's happiness and well-being" that involves "commitment." The book guides parents to give children opportunities to practice, and thereby reinforce, making sound choices.

Wiring young minds to be strong and steadfast, headed for lifelong committed relationships, goes a long way toward helping teens avoid emotional pain, regret, unintended pregnancy, STDs, and other negative outcomes of sex outside of marriage.

FOCUS: Common Core's Newer Math: A Return to Mathematical Ignorance

By David G. Bonagura, Jr.

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The following sentences from the *New York Times* could have been written today in homage to the Common Core Standards Initiative, the recently adopted national standards for the teaching of mathematics and English-language arts in grades K–12:

Instead of this old method, the educators would stress from the earliest grades the new concept of the unity of mathematics and an understanding of its structure, using techniques that have been developed since the turn of the century. . . . The new concepts must be taught in high school to prepare the students for the type of mathematics that they will find when they reach college.

But the century in question here is the 20th, not the 21st. This article, written in 1961, is not about today's Common Core, but about New Math, the program that was supposed to transform mathematics education by emphasizing concepts and theories rather than traditional computation. Instead, after a few short years of propagating ignorance of all things mathematical, New Math became the butt of jokes nationwide (the *Peanuts* comic strip took aim more than once) before it was unceremoniously abandoned.

Flash forward 50 years, and Common Core is today making the same promises:

The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.

But what makes us think Common Core will live up to its hype? And how is

it substantially different from New Math, as well as subsequent math programs such as Sequential Math, Math A/B, and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards? These have all failed America's children — even though each program promised to transform them into young Einsteins and Aristotles.

The problem with Common Core is not that it provides standards, but that, despite its claims, there is a particular pedagogy that accompanies the standards. And this pedagogy is flawed, for, just as in New Math, from the youngest ages Common Core buries students in concepts at the expense of content.

Take, for example, my first-grade son's Common Core math lesson in basic subtraction. Six- and seven-year-olds do not yet possess the ability to think abstractly; their mathematics instruction, therefore, must employ concrete methodologies, explanations, and examples. But rather than, say, count on a number line or use objects, Common Core's standards mandate teaching first-graders to "decompose" two-digit numbers in an effort to emphasize the concept of place value. Thus $13 - 4$ is warped into $13 - 3 = 10 - 1 = 9$. Decomposition is a useful skill for older children, but my first-grade son has no clue what it is about or how to do it. He can, however, memorize the answer to $13 - 4$. But Common Core does not advocate that tried-and-true technique.

Common Core's elevation of concept over computation continues in its place-value method for multiplying two-digit numbers, which is taught in fourth grade. Rather than multiply each digit of the number from right to left, Common Core requires students to multiply each place value so that they have to add four numbers, rather than two, as the final step in finding the product.

Common Core's most distinctive feature is its insistence that "mathematically proficient students" express understanding of the underlying concepts behind math problems through verbal and written expression. No longer is it sufficient to solve a word problem or al-

gebraic equation and "show your work"; now the work is to be explained by way of written sentences.

I have seen this "writing imperative" first-hand in my sons' first- and third-grade Common Core math classes. There is certainly space in their respective books for traditional computation, but the books devote enormous space to word problems that have to be answered verbally as well as numerically, some in sections called Write Math. The reason, we are told, is that the Common Core-driven state assessments will contain large numbers of word problems and spaces for students to explain their answers verbally.

This prescription immediately dooms grammar-school students who have reading difficulties or are not fluent in English: The mathematical numbers that they could have grasped are now locked into sentences they cannot understand.

The most egregious manifestation of the "writing imperative" is the Four Corners and a Diamond graphic organizer that my sons' school has implemented to help prepare for the writing portion of the state assessments. The "fourth corner" requires students to explain the problem and solution in multiple sentences. How all this writing helps them with math is yet to be demonstrated.

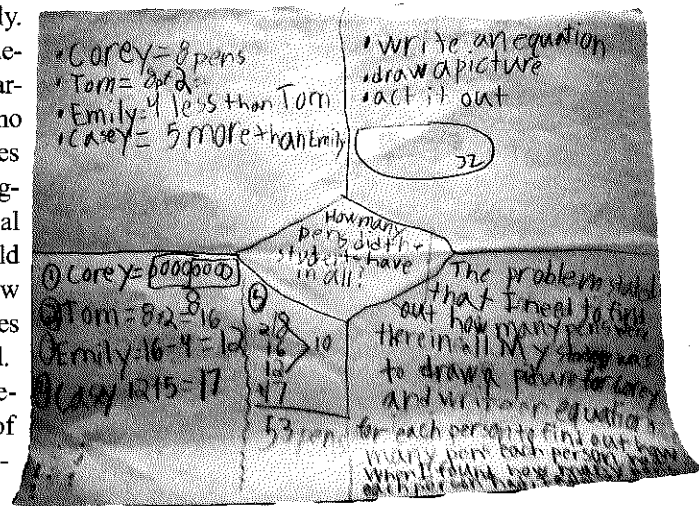
Hence Common Core looks terribly similar to the failed New Math program, which also emphasized "the why rather than the how, the fundamental concepts that unify the various specialties, from arithmetic to calculus and beyond, rather than the mechanical manipulations and rule memorizations." Common Core may not completely eschew the "how," and it may not be obsessed with binary sets and matrices as New Math was, but it is likely to lose the "how" — the content — in its efforts to move the "why" — the concepts — into the foreground.

The problem is not that students, including those in the primary grades, should not be presented the basic concepts of mathematics — they should be. But there is a difference between learning basic concepts and expressing the intricacies of true mathematical proofs that Common Core desires. Mathematical concepts require a high aptitude for abstract thinking — a skill not possessed by young children and never attained by many. What will happen to students who already struggle with

math when they are not only forced to explain what they do not understand, but are presented new material in abstract conceptual formats?

All students must learn to perform the basic mathematical operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in order to function well in society. Knowing why these operations work as they do is a great benefit, but it is not essential. And in mathematics, concepts are often grasped long after students have mastered content — not before.

In trying to learn both the "why" and the "how" in order to prepare for the



"Four Corners and a Diamond" Graphic Organizer

state assessments, students will not fully grasp either: They will not receive the instructional time needed to learn how to do the operations because teachers will be forced to devote their precious few classroom minutes to explaining concepts, as the assessments require. The "how" of the basic operations, which need to be memorized and practiced over and over, will be insufficiently learned, since Common Core orders teachers to serve two masters.

The result is simple arithmetic: Instead of developing college- and career-ready students, we will have another generation of students who cannot even make change from a \$5 bill, all courtesy of the latest set of bureaucrat-promoted standards that promise to save American education.

By giving concept priority over content, Common Core has failed to learn the history lesson from New Math. Students instructed according to Common Core standards will ultimately know neither the "why" nor the "how," and we will eventually consign these standards to the ever-expanding dustbin of failed educational initiatives, until the next messianic program is unveiled.

And, of course, this doomed educational experiment, like its predecessors, has a high cost: our children's ability to do math.

David G. Bonagura, Jr. is a teacher and writer in New York. He has written about education for *Crisis*, *The Catholic Thing*, *The University Bookman*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He writes about Common Core math on his blog: attackofcc.blogspot.com

The old way:	The new way:
$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 29 \\ + 17 \\ \hline 46 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 20 + 9 \\ 10 + 7 \\ \hline 30 + 16 \\ (10 + 6) \\ 40 + 6 = 46 \end{array}$
<p>We use the word evidence in math to help students find evidence in the text that shows this math situation is increasing (adding), decreasing (subtracting), or comparing (finding the amount that is different: more or less.)</p>	

One Man's Money (Continued from page 1)

that promotes “sustainable development” and global governance at the expense of private properties, individual liberty, and national sovereignty. Some Common Core concepts align with Agenda 21’s education goals.

Whether Bill Gates is a globalist aligned with United Nations Agenda 21, a liberal do-gooder, or something in between, most agree that one unelected philanthropist wielding so much power is not the American way.

Gates’s First Education Failure

Gates has a poor education track record. Analysts say his first foray into influencing education was a failure. In 2003, the Gates Foundation decided that small high schools were the ticket. He funded programs to create and improve small and personalized high schools, each having around 400 students. The Gates Foundation gave “grants to more than 2,000 high schools — of which about 800 were existing schools attempting to create smaller schools within schools.” (*Seattle Times*, 11-5-2006)

Gates himself admitted in his 2009 Annual Letter that the Small Schools Project was unsuccessful. Gates wrote, “Many of the small schools that we invested in did not improve students’ achievement in any significant way.” He said that while some schools had higher attendance and graduation rates than peer schools, “we are trying to raise college-ready graduation rates, and in most cases, we fell short.” (*GatesFoundation.org*)

Melinda Gates told *Business Week* in 2006 that Small Schools Project “set-backs” didn’t mean they had “squandered the \$1 billion the foundation has spent so far.” She continued, “If you want to equate being naïve with being inexperienced, then we were definitely naïve when we first started.” (*Business Week*, 6-25-2006)

Education blogger Mercedes Schneider states:

[T]he extraordinary [eventual] \$2 billion initiative — which created 2,600 new small schools in 45 states and the District of Columbia — has been ditched by Gates and his foundation. School districts across the nation were left disrupted, with some charging that Gates had abandoned the successful good schools he created and Gates citing statistics showing the project failed. Gates has now moved on to funding a completely different approach. . . .

Schneider continues, “Gates is a businessman. If one business venture is failing, move on to the next. So what if it hurts people?” (*Deutsch29.wordpress.com*, 3-15-13)

In the case of Common Core, Gates’s possibly naïve, possibly devious experiment stands to harm an entire generation of schoolchildren.

Bill Gates Demands Common Core

Undaunted by his first false start, Gates has nonetheless undertaken the funding of a sweeping change in American education. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation now promotes an untested, top-down, national standards scheme with aligned testing that has children, parents, and teachers reeling from the fallout. Individual states and local school boards are not helpless to stop the juggernaut but little has actually been achieved. The grassroots movement to stop Common Core has gained traction but no state has effectively halted Common Core implementation. Indiana has pulled out of Common Core but drafts of the standards they are developing are, so far, about a 90% match to Common Core. Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia are the only states that have never adopted Common Core standards.

One reason Common Core is difficult to slow down and examine is Gates Foundation money. Gates has handed out money to organizations, think tanks, and newspapers, providing organizations and the people behind them with enormous amounts

of cash. This may have influenced opinions and tainted reports about Common Core standards. Ethics breaches may be occurring because of Gates Foundation dollars. Besides the \$2.3 billion in direct Gates cash, many businesses and other entities are making unprecedented amounts of money from Common Core implementation.

Common Core is a perfect example of a few people making something happen, many more just going along with what happened, and the rest left wondering what just happened. The Obama administration, Bill Gates, and a small circle of others circumvented the voting public and pushed Common Core into schools.

Gates has control of the opinion machine; he’s given grants to hundreds of education “reform” groups who now support Common Core. The Gates Foundation is a primary funder of *Education Week*, which calls itself “American Education’s Newspaper of Record.” Articles tend to paint opponents of Common Core as Tea Party fanatics. In each edition, the newspaper features ads for Common Core-related companies and curriculum; many of them are glossy full-page color ads that garner hefty revenue for the publication.

Even the PTA has been subverted by Gates’s money. The National Parent Teacher Association failed to take a stand for students and parents. Gates Foundation dollars have flowed to the PTA for years; they received \$2 million in 2009 and in 2013 they received almost \$500,000 “to educate parents and communities on the Common Core Standards and empower leaders to create the changes needed in their school systems.” In other words, to persuade parents to accept Common Core.



Federal Lunch Standards (Continued from page 1)

researchers recently published results of a study conducted at four cafeterias in “an unnamed urban, low-income school district.” They measured the effects of the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* and found that since the institution of federal policies on school cafeterias, although “students still threw away much of what they were served, the total amount of fruits and vegetables discarded went down since the standards implementation.” (*Education Week*, 3-12-14)

Taxpayers are paying for food that is tossed in the trash by students. Federal government interference into local school dietary decisions has decreased affordability for some families formerly able to pay for school lunch and made

some students willingly toss their unpalatable lunches in the garbage can.

Montague, as head of the School Nutrition Association, claims to “represent thousands of school nutrition professionals nationwide who believe every student should receive free, healthy meals as part of the school day because good nutrition is critical to student achievement.” She’s suggesting a free lunch for every student.

A good night’s sleep is also critical to student achievement. We are not certain that all students have good mattresses. A federal program to provide adequate mattresses in all schools would make it unnecessary for students ever to go home. Maybe Bill Gates will fund the project.

Math (Continued from page 1)

Mathematics Using Social Justice Contexts

- Reparations: A Cultural Context for Math Instruction
- Green Geometry: Designing a Sustainable Community
- Social Justice and Community Action Through Math
- The Oscars, Video Games, and Twitter: Critical Media Literacy and Mathematics
- They can’t learn OUR math: Teaching the African American Learner

Rethinking Schools

Some of the workshops offered at the Los Angeles conference were taken from Rethinking Schools curricula. Rethinking Schools has been around for 27 years. According to its website:

Rethinking Schools is a nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism. (*RethinkingSchools.org*)

There was a panel discussion on Sunday focused on using Rethinking Schools mathematics, a part of Rethinking Schools, in classrooms. One Rethinking Schools workshop was “Modeling Home: What’s Your Material World?” In this workshop teaching focuses on disparity in the world, as indicated by this synopsis:

Learn to connect middle schoolers’ experience with tight spaces to indoor living conditions around the world. By building scale model homes according to a random chance of birth, students reason in three-dimensions, practice important middle school ideas in ratio and measurement and think critically about what is a fair share of the earth’s resources.

There is disparity and unfairness in the world. One problem with social justice theory is that rather than ameliorating conditions of the less fortunate, the aim is usually to lower Western standards, and in this case, to make innocent children feel guilty and responsible for inequities.

Bill Ayers, the Obama associate who is a terrorist-turned-educator, was the keynote speaker at the Rethinking Schools 25th Anniversary Gala in 2011.

Ayers, a social justice education hero, also won the 2011 Social Justice in Education Award.

One area where Rethinking Schools has it right is their view of Common Core standards. Although the mainstream media relentlessly insists that Common Core disenchantment comes only from far-right and Tea Party groups, the current issue of *Rethinking Schools* magazine reports on the progressive group’s displeasure in an article titled “The Problems with the Common Core”:

The standards were drafted largely behind closed doors by academics and assessment “experts,” many with ties to testing companies. . . . [It is] a massively well-financed campaign of billionaires and politically powerful advocacy organizations. . . . Rethinking Schools has always been skeptical of standards imposed from above. Too many standards projects have been efforts to move decisions about teaching and learning away from educators and schools, and put them in the hands of distant bureaucracies and politicians. (*ReThinking Schools*, Winter 2013-14)

Ethnomathematics

Ethnomathematics is the study of the relationship between mathematics and culture. An ethnomathematics workshop offered at the January conference was “The Beauty of Mayan Numbers,” described on the conference schedule as “a lesson that’s relevant culturally and rigorous mathematically.” The workshop blurb states: “It will conclude with a discussion of how contemporary number systems that are alternative to base-10 can be used to strengthen numeracy and algebraic representation skills.” Teaching alternatives to base-ten number systems when all current math is based on ten seems a reach and quite possibly a waste of time for students and teachers who are already struggling to get math right.

Since states began implementing Common Core, all sorts of social justice math teaching has popped up in classrooms. It seems that if a lesson plan is labeled Common Core-aligned, no matter how misguided, it may be taught to students. Standards that “change how math is taught” leave classrooms wide open to adding social justice content.