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An Opportunity to Fight Common Core

On July 22, Common Core will be challenged during a live, interactive event at local movie theaters across the nation. Michelle Malkin, Glenn Beck, and others who are opposed to "top-down, one-size-fits-all solutions" and the loss of local control of education will join audience members to share strategies. "We Will Not Conform" is an opportunity to listen to experts and plan with others who are equally fed up with the establishment of an inferior set of standards that are difficult to ditch.

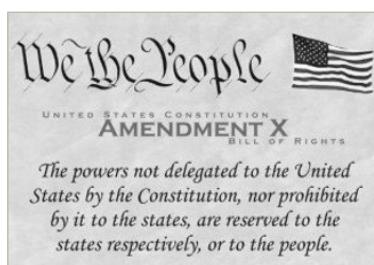
The event planners say, "By the end of the night, the brainpower, experience, and passion of thousands of people from around the country will be captured in a comprehensive, unified plan of action distributed to all participants." FreedomWorks and David Barton are among those who will help facilitate the evening. A non-interactive repeat will be shown in theaters on the evening of July 29. To find local theaters hosting the event go to FathomEvents.com.

Common Core Rejected by States

In June, Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin signed legislation that permanently halts the use of Common Core standards, requires the state to temporarily use previous standards, and directs that new standards to be developed will be subject to legislative review. The legislation she signed was overwhelmingly passed in the state's House and Senate on the final day of the 2014 legislative session. Gov. Fallin's action is particularly relevant because she previously supported Common Core and is the Chair of the National Governors Association, one of the two private lobbying organizations at the center of the effort to create Common Core.

Common Core (CC) standards were hastily created in closed meetings and subject to no legislative or public review. Parents, teachers, and citizens must be part of the effort to create improved standards. Fallin said, "We are very capable as Oklahomans of developing our own Oklahoma standards to make sure that our children receive the highest quality education possible in our state." Fallin called Common Core "tainted" and "divisive." She admitted that the state may lose some money because the Obama administration ties federal funding to certain Common Core criteria.

State Superintendent of Education



On May 30, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley signed a law that will allow the state to review Common Core, but the standards remain in place for the 2014-15 school year; any changes will be implemented the following year. Critics worry that South Carolina won't get rid of enough of what is wrong with Common Core.

The South Carolina General Assembly must approve any future standards that are not created by the state Dept. of Education, which may guard against a rewrite of Common Core. The state has also withdrawn from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), one of two federally financed standardized testing organizations.

(See Common Core Rejected, page 4)

Obama's Scary Plan for Preschoolers

On May 2, 2014, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Kathleen Sebelius gave a speech to the Committee for Economic Development. She touted "an exciting investment opportunity." She claims the investment "promises solid dividends and long-term growth" and states "its payout ratio is so solid that it's projected to return at least \$7 for every dollar that's put in." To what investment does the HHS secretary refer? "Infants and toddlers in those precious early years from birth to kindergarten." (HHS.gov, 5-4-14)

Most parents don't think of their children as an investment and some may be disturbed to hear a federal official speaking about them in those terms, especially to the Committee for Economic Development. The CED describes itself as "a group of business and education leaders committed to improving the growth and productivity of the U.S. economy, a freer global trading system, and greater opportunity for all Americans." (CED.org) Parents may not approve of this plan whose aim seems to be to turn out cogs for the industrial machine rather than educated citizens.

While explaining President Obama's "Early Childhood Package," Sebe-

lius in her May speech points out other programs that she claims are good for America: the *Affordable Care Act* or Obamacare; expansion of Medicaid; reauthorization and expansion of the Children's Health Insurance Program or CHIP; and the expansion of Head Start.

Obama's Early Childhood Package

What is Obama's Early Childhood Package? According to Sebelius, the plan is that all preschool children "should have an opportunity to be in a high-quality learning environment and acquire social, emotional, and educational skills at the same time." The first part of the plan is "universal preschool for every four-year-old child in America." It is unclear whether this is intended to be mandatory. Sebelius offers the following to show just how far behind she thinks America is:

In Japan, virtually every 4-year-old attends preschool. In Britain, 97% of 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschool. And by 2020, China plans to provide 80% of its three- and four-year-olds with preschool education.

But is that something that American parents want and are those countries that America wishes to emulate?

Sebelius laments *Economist* magazine's assertion that America ranks 26th among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development nation members in percentage of four-year-olds in preschool and 24th for three-year-olds. But maybe some American families prefer to keep their children home during those tender years.

Referring to research by Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, Sebelius claims that babies and toddlers "develop 700 new neurological connections every single second," a phenomenon that is "the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depend." Does it not occur to Sebelius and federal officials that many parents choose to be with their own children during this crucial time rather than entrusting them to someone else?

Head Start Grants

The next goal of Obama's package is to "grow the supply of effective early learning opportunities for our children," including new "Early Head Start-Child Care partnerships through which we award competitive grants to communities that make Early Head Start available to more families." Sebelius claims, "We know from a wide array of research that the investments we make in early childhood initiatives put those kids on a path to learn more in school, and earn more in the workplace." It is unclear to what research she is referring because actual research shows that Head Start is a failed program: any gains made by young children disappear in the early grades and, in



fact, there is evidence that some children are harmed by the program. (See April, 2013 *Education Reporter*)

Yet, as stated at the HHS Administration for Children and Families website, Obama's plan "will maintain and build on current Head Start investments, to support a greater share of infants, toddlers, and three-year-olds in America's Head Start centers." (HHS.gov). The federal government seems intent that infants and toddlers be away from their own homes and enrolled in an institutional setting.

This is also the premise of President Obama's proposal that "encourages states to expand the availability of full-day kindergarten." Claiming that "only 6 out of 10 of America's kindergarten students have access to a full day of learning," the Obama administration wants all children to spend the "time they need in school to reach rigorous benchmarks and standards."

Critics worry that this drive to get young children out of family life and into institutions is harmful; they believe young children can learn while being with their own parents and caregivers chosen by their parents.

Voluntary Home Visitation

The final part of Obama's Early Childhood package is "voluntary home visitation." The visitations are to be conducted by "nurses, social workers, and other trained professionals." Sebelius also favorably mentions pediatricians who can "screen for ... parental depression." The visitation program aims to start with low-income families. To some it sounds as if the federal government doubts the ability of low-income parents to parent their own children without federal supervision and monitoring.

Once the visitation program gets started, it is not certain that it would be limited by income levels; the intrusion could soon be manifest in all families. There is little doubt that some want these federal programs to become universal. Sebelius promotes the Health and Human Services "Watch Me Thrive!" program that creates "universal developmental and behavioral screenings, so that we can track a child's progress in areas like language, social development, and motor development." In what may seem to some to be double-speak, Sebelius claims these intrusions by the government into the family are "based on the premise that a child's best and most important teachers are a child's parents." As Ronald Reagan said, "The nine most

(See Preschoolers, page 4)

EDUCATION BRIEFS

The judge in *Vergara v. California* has issued a tentative decision in favor of abolishing the union-friendly laws that make it nearly impossible to fire a teacher in that state. Judge Rolf Treu wrote, "The evidence this court heard was that it could take anywhere from two to almost ten years and cost \$50,000 to \$450,000 or more to bring these cases to conclusion under the Dismissal Statutes, and that given these facts, grossly ineffective teachers are being left in the classroom because school officials do not wish to go through the time and expense to investigate and prosecute these cases." (*Washington Times*, 6-10-14)

According to Mike Antonucci of the Education Intelligence Agency, the National Education Association teachers union "has designated \$10 million from member dues contributions for the 2014 general election, an increase of \$2 million from 2012." While union dues can't be contributed directly to political candidates, they are used to help union-allied Democrats remain in office using various methods to communicate with the public about candidates and issues. (*EIAonline.com*, 5-27-14)

As school let out for summer in New Orleans, the last five traditional public schools closed, making the city the only one in the nation made up entirely of charter schools. "All 33,000 students in the district must apply for a seat at one of the 58 public charter schools, relying on a computerized lottery to determine placement." (*Washington Post*, 5-28-14)

The new alphabet board book, *A is for Activist*, encourages very young children to become political. The "A" words are: "Advocate. Abolitionist. Ally. Actively Answering A call to Action." Another of the 26 offerings is "E": Equal rights black, brown, or white. Clean and healthy is a right. Every place we live and play Environmental justice is the way."

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Life and Death of Vocational Education

With the advent of the "college-for-all" movement, vocational education has almost disappeared from high schools. But jobs that involve welding, plumbing, 3-D printers, or baking cakes; occupations that include repairing automobiles, motorcycles, or air conditioning units; and jobs like electrician, carpenter, restaurant manager, x-ray tech, or attending to patients in a hospital are unlikely to be outsourced to a foreign country. Jobs that require skill, but not necessarily a college diploma, are going unfilled while file clerks with bachelor of arts degrees pay off or default on student loans. Some jobs requiring a college degree pay much less than jobs requiring no college degree.

Working with one's hands and knowing how to do something is looked down upon by some, although those who do so are valuable members of society who often feel empowered by their work. Working in the trades and other so-called blue-collar jobs can result in a productive adulthood with a good income, job satisfaction, and stable employment.

Not every student wants to attend college or is capable of being successful

there. When educators and politicians admit this, students who now dislike school may thrive. Some students drop out of college-for-all high schools because they become discouraged by their lack of options.

What States Can Do

A few states are preparing high school students for occupations that will challenge them, provide a good income, and allow them to use skill and ingenuity to solve problems while working with their hands, as well as with their brains. What was once called Vocational Education is now usually referred to as Career and Technical Education (CTE). High schools

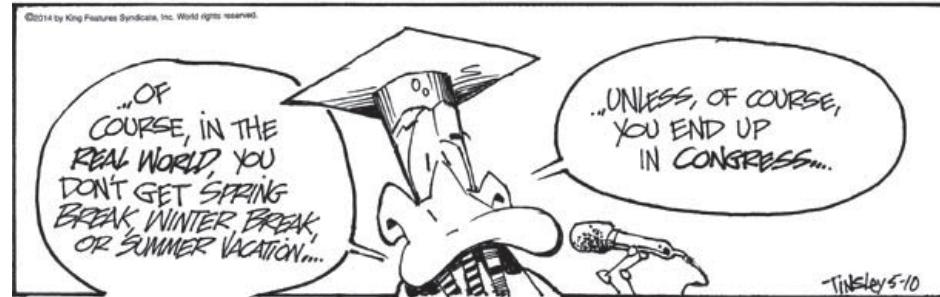
can partner with businesses, community colleges, and four-year institutions to plan and provide programs for students that will lead to careers.

Georgia high schools offer an innovative CTE program that allows students to learn vocational skills without necessarily being forced into a non-college-prep track. The Pathway Program is designed to avoid "social stratification." Although courses are

(See *Vocational Education*, page 4)



MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Sluggish Cognitive Tempo Disorder

Schools may soon be handing out drugs to treat yet another psychological disorder, in addition to ADD and ADHD. The January issue of the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* dedicates 136 pages to "Sluggish Cognitive Tempo disorder." Although many are wary of yet another mental diagnosis for children, the journal declares that the question of the existence of Sluggish Cognitive Tempo disorder "seems to be laid to rest as of this issue."

Sluggish Cognitive Tempo disorder has as its main characteristics "daydreaming, lethargy, and slow mental processing." Proponents estimate that Sluggish Cognitive Tempo (SCT) disorder affects as many as two million children.

Psychiatric physician and Duke University professor *emeritus* Allen Frances writes in *Psychology Today* that SCT has the potential to harm children; not because it is a real disorder but because "child psychology/psychiatry/pediatrics/family medicine have become fevered fields of diagnostic excess, pharmaceutical manipulation, and careless medication prescription." Frances notes that according to one study, by age 21, 81% of all schoolchildren have qualified for diagnosis of a mental disorder. (4-12-14)

Investigative reporter and critic of

over diagnosis of ADD and ADHD Alan Schwarz writes in the *New York Times*, "Some powerful figures in mental health are claiming to have identified a new disorder that could vastly expand the ranks of young people treated for attention problems." He reports

that some experts warn that "there is no consensus on SCT's specific symptoms, let alone scientific validity" and that "the concept's promotion without vastly more scientific rigor could expose children to unwarranted diagnoses and prescription medications — problems that ADHD already faces."

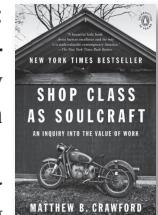
An Eli Lilly pharmaceuticals spokeswoman wrote in an email to Schwarz, "Sluggish Cognitive Tempo is one of many conditions that Lilly scientists continue to study to help satisfy unmet medical needs around the world."

Dr. Allen Frances says, "We're seeing a fad in evolution: Just as ADHD has been the diagnosis *du jour* for 15 years or so, this is the beginning of another." (*New York Times*, 4-11-14) He warns of a public health experiment on children and cautions that "enthusiasts here are thinking of missed patients. What about the mislabeled kids who are called patients when there's nothing wrong with them?"

Book of the Month



Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work, Matthew B. Crawford, Penguin Books, 2009, \$16



Shop Class as Soulcraft offers a compelling look at education and career choice. The author holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Chicago and owns and operates a motorcycle repair shop in Richmond, Virginia. He laments the disappearance of vocational education from high schools.

While debunking the idea that college is for everyone, Crawford extols the value of finding "work that is fitting." He writes that "there is much talk of 'diversity' in education" but there is not much allowance for "the diversity of dispositions." He states that not every student is suited for college or desires the sort of job one gets after college.

Crawford concedes that "maybe higher education is indispensable to prepare students for the jobs of the information economy," but not for the reasons we'd like to believe. Rather, he claims that "college habituates young people to accept as the normal course of things a mismatch between . . . official representations and reality." He says, "The contemporary office requires the development of a self that is ready for teamwork, rooted in shared habits of flexibility rather than strong individual character."

Drawing on his experiences as the head of a think tank and as a technical writer, Crawford submits that office workers can become "a cog in the intellectual technology, rather than a thinking person." He criticizes risk-averse, team-focused jobs for which there is no measured right or wrong outcome.

That is in distinct contrast to the author's work as a motorcycle mechanic and to other jobs in trades where there are objective and "readily apparent measures of accuracy." It is entirely up to the mechanic to determine how to make the bike work; he has a direct obligation to his customer; and, in the end, there's no such thing as "good enough." Either the bike runs right or it does not. He writes, "to be a good mechanic you have to be constantly attentive to the possibility that you may be mistaken." Crawford claims that this gives "ethical virtue" to the work and is also "an affront to the throw away society," while offering "a counterweight to the culture of narcissism."

Offering a fresh approach to "do what you love," this book suggests "a tighter connection between life and livelihood" that may result in more students finishing high school and in employees loving their jobs, not just putting in their hours and hoping for the weekend to come quickly.

FOCUS: COMMON CORE: A Failed Idea Newly Cloaked in the Robes of Good Intentions

Originally published at Common Core: Education Without Representation (WhatIsCommonCore.wordpress.com) on April 15, 2014 and reprinted with permission.

My name is Alma Ohene-Opere, an alumnus of Brigham Young University (BYU) and a native of Accra, Ghana. Over the past few months, I have followed with much amusement, the nationwide debate for and against the adoption and implementation of the Common Core standards. The arguments have been fierce and passionate on both sides and seem to stem from a universal desire to raise the quality of education in America. The desire is noble. However, this noble desire will not compensate for or mitigate the empirically documentable effects of the failed policy being proposed.

Common Core may be new to America, but to me and the thousands who have migrated to the United States to seek better educational opportunities, it is in large part the reason we came here. If you are wondering what qualifies me to make the assertions I will make in this article, know this; I am one of the few victims of a standardized national education system in Ghana who was lucky enough to escape its impact. I am also a member of the Board of Directors of a private K-12 institution in Accra, Ghana. Golden Sunbeam Montessori School was founded by my mother in 1989 and is currently leading the fight to rid our country of an educational system that has led to the systematic degradation and deterioration of our human capital.

Let's get to the core of my argument; pun intended. What Americans are calling Common Core is eerily similar to my educational experience growing up in Ghana. In Ghana, K-12th grade education was tightly controlled by the Ghana Education Service, an organization similar to the U.S. Department of Education. From curricula to syllabi to standardized testing, the government controlled everything.

Trapped by Standardized Tests

In 9th grade, all students, in order to progress to high school are required to take a standardized exam known as the B.E.C.E, which stands for Basic Education Certification Examination. Depending on the results of the test, each student is assigned by a computer program to a public high school without regard to his or her interests, passions, or ambitions. Each student is then assigned an area of focus for the next three years. Some of the focus areas are General Science, Business Management, General Arts, Visual Arts, Home Economics, Agriculture, etc.

Although things may have changed slightly since I graduated, most students generally did not have a choice as to which area of focus they were assigned.

The only way to get a choice was to ace the standardized exam or to call in a favor either through bribery or some other type of corruption. The students who failed miserably were usually those who attended public schools; many of whom dropped out of school entirely.

The process was then repeated at the end of high school with another standardized exam called the W.A.S.S.C.E. This exam tested your readiness for college and ultimately determined which course of study you were assigned by the government in college. I did not ace that exam and did not get permission to enter the state run college of my choice. Instead, I went to a private university founded by a former Microsoft employee and was found smart enough to be admitted to BYU a year later as a transfer student, to graduate with a Bachelor degree in Information Technology, and to be hired right out of college as a Program Manager at Microsoft Corporation.

Although the education system in Ghana is not similar in all aspects to Common Core as it is being proposed today, some of the basic tenets are the same. The curriculum was controlled by an external body without input from or accountability to teachers, individual schools, or parents. Some argue that teachers and parents have control in Common Core. It pains me to witness such naivety. That myth has always been an inevitable play by proponents of any centralized system. The goal is to make people think they are in control while nudging them blindly towards a perceived public interest. The truth is simple; the institution that controls the exams, controls the curriculum.

By controlling the standardized exams, each school in Ghana was forced to make passing the exam its primary focus, rather than actual teaching and learning. Hence anything that was deemed outside the purview of the test was cast aside and treated as unimportant. Extra-curricular activities were cut if not totally eliminated and the school day was lengthened to ensure that students had even more time to prepare for the test.

In my case, school started at 6:00 am and ended as late as 6:00 pm. We attended school on Saturdays. Even when school was out, we still attended school half day. Our lives were consumed with preparation for the standardized test. We all had booklets of past tests going back 15 years. Those who anticipated failing the test registered in advance to re-take the test. The value of teachers was measured solely on the performance of their students on the standardized tests. Scammers who purported to know what would appear on the tests duped schools, parents, and teachers alike by selling bogus test questions. Schools with political

connections always unanimously aced the tests.

You may wonder why nobody ever tried to change the system. The answer is simple. The government made it impossible by requiring all students who wanted to go to high school or college to take the test. Hence, any time spent trying to change the system meant time taken away from preparing for the test. Parents became completely beholden to the system and would threaten to take the kids to other schools if administrators spent any time not preparing their kids for the test.

A Dearth of Ingenuity and Creativity

Now that you have a sense of how an education system can become trapped in the death spiral of standardized tests, let me interest you with the impact of this system on actual student outcomes. In Ghana, we had a phrase to describe how we felt about standardized tests. We called it "chew and pour, pass and forget." Translated, it means memorize, regurgitate, pass the exam, and forget everything.

Unfortunately that has become reality for many graduates of our educational system. As my father put it in a recent petition to the Ghana Education Service, "the education system in Ghana is akin to an assembly line setup by the government to create employees for an economy largely devoid of innovation, entrepreneurship, originality, or risk taking." Because students never learn to solve problems or think critically for themselves and are largely discouraged from challenging their teachers or the status quo, they are inevitably groomed to maintain the failed traditions of the past while believing they are completely powerless to change anything. The result is that even with an abundance of natural resources, the country in general continues to suffer in the doldrums of socio-economic development without any clear path out of it.

Recently my brother left a well-paying job in the U.S. to return to Ghana to take over my parent's school. He had dreams of changing the system. He imagined students groomed to become innovators and entrepreneurs. He soon learned it was impossible to achieve any of those dreams if the school was to remain subject to the rules, restrictions, and common standards the government had set. The only solution was to completely abandon the system, which he fears would cause parents to withdraw their children from the school. He is now stuck in the limbo of a catch-22 but continues to fight to win students, teachers, and parents over to a new beginning for the education of their children.

In December 2012, I returned to Ghana with my family and had the opportunity to speak to 10th grade students at the school. I gave what I thought was an inspiring speech. I proposed to start



an innovation and entrepreneurship club which would employ students to identify and propose solutions to some of the problems facing the country. I promised

to provide the capital and resources necessary to support these kids in this new challenge. I ended by asking the kids who were interested to write their names on a piece of paper or email me. It's been more than 18 months since

I returned. I have received nothing and I don't blame them. Their parents have paid a large sum of money because they believed our school would help their kids pass the standardized exam. I was not about to distract them from that goal. What a tragedy.

I have personally wondered what makes Africa so uniquely challenged in its attempts at economic development, especially when all the innovations needed to do so are readily available to us. I came to a personal conclusion, which admittedly is not scientific, but captures what I believe to be the elusive culprit. It is contentment with mediocrity and a lack of curiosity to change the status quo. The problem is not inherent in the nature of Africans but rather the imposition of an educational system that burned out the light of innovation and made us content to live on the spoils of the countries brave enough to venture into the glory of the unknown.

America's Mistake

When I came here, many people would ask what the difference was between America and Ghana. I responded that in Ghana, I could dream. In America, I can do.

In writing this article, I am by no means endorsing the current state of public education in the United States. The problem with the system today is that the U.S. government, aided by self-interested unions, has spent decades and billions of dollars trying to return to a system of education that America abandoned a long time ago; a system that has proven a failure in many parts of the world. Common Core is just the latest iteration of the failed system. Like a wise man once said, oh that I were an angel and could have the wish of my heart; to stand on the mountain top to warn against the path you are choosing to take. As an outsider looking in, I recognize one thing that most Americans don't. Because America has been free for so long, many have no sense of what tyranny looks like and how quickly physical and intellectual freedom can be lost on the path paved with good intentions.

I plead with all you well-intentioned but definitely misguided administrators, teachers, and politicians. Raise your heads out of the dust and realize that America is great because America bucked against the status quo. Thinking a standardized and common core curriculum is innovative is like discovering water in the ocean and patting yourself on the back for it. This system is not

(See Common Core FOCUS, page 4)

Common Core FOCUS

new. Its greatest success was to create a conforming working class for the industrial revolution. It is not fit for a dynamic 21st century that needs constant innovation and the confidence to create new solutions to the problems that continue to beset and confound the smartest minds in the world.

America is desperate to find a solution to a problem that you solved decades ago. Return to originality. Put teachers and parents in charge of the education of their children. Encourage critical thinking that rejects conformity for the sake of some perceived societal benefit. Teach children to solve problems and not just to regurgitate the solutions of generations past. I have been silent too long and have

(Continued from page 3)

now seized this opportunity to stand up for what I believe, which ironically is something I have learned from my experience in America.

America, I urge you to learn from the mistakes of those around because, like the plaque in my former bishop's office read, "you may not live long enough to make all those mistakes yourself."

Alma Ohene-Opare was born and reared in Ghana, the child of educators who ran a school for 25 years. After graduating from Brigham Young University, Ohene-Opare worked for Microsoft. He is currently a solutions engineer at Hyland Software in Utah and is pursuing an MBA at Western Governor's University.

Common Core Rejected

Louisiana's Struggle

Since the state legislature failed to overturn the use of Common Core in Louisiana schools, Gov. Bobby Jindal is trying to do it on his own. He has called on the state Board of Education to create "Louisiana standards and a Louisiana test." Jindal says use of CC aligned tests supplied by the federally supported Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is illegal because their use was not put out for bid as required by state law. But state education officials have no intention of creating new standards and have vowed to keep CC standards and testing; they question the governor's authority to put a halt to CC in Louisiana.

How States Can Make Changes

Announcing she signed the bill to halt Common Core in Oklahoma, Gov. Fallin stated: "We cannot ignore the widespread concerns of citizens, parents, educators, and legislators who have expressed fear that adopting Common Core gives up local control of Oklahoma's public schools." (*Washington Post*, 6-5-14) But those concerns are being ignored in the majority of states. Legislative attempts to halt Common Core have failed in several states. Although Indiana dropped Common Core, the revised standards developed closely follow the rejected standards.

A survey conducted by the *Times Union* and Siena College found that 82% of New Yorkers want to stop Common Core in their state. Yet, citizens seem powerless to halt it because their government is unresponsive and New York Commissioner of Education John King is unwilling to even consider their concerns.

Amidst seemingly insurmountable obstacles, there is hope for success. Dr. Sandra Stotsky, who was the chief developer of Massachusetts' excellent standards, has outlined ways that Common Core can be dumped by localities, with or without the support of state government. Her complete suggestions are available in her article "Legislative Common Core Remedy No Panacea," posted at the Pioneer Institute website (5-28-14).

Stotsky was a member of the Common Core validation committee and refused to sign off on the standards, which she deems to be seriously flawed. She is

also a former member of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel.

Dr. Stotsky offers two plans. One can be used when legislators refuse to act by offering localities the means to replace Common Core. The second plan will work for states where there is legislative support to do away with Common Core. In that case the state legislature would "develop and pass a bill to eliminate the state board and department of education." In both cases, new and improved standards would follow.

To develop new English Language Arts standards, Stotsky suggests states or localities use as blueprints either the pre-Common Core California standards or her own ELA standards that are based on the former, excellent Massachusetts ELA standards (that were dropped in favor of Common Core). Stotsky recommends new math standards should be chosen in consultation with high school mathematics teachers and based on the standards of either Minnesota, California 1997, Indiana 2006, or Massachusetts 2000. (Minnesota never adopted CC math standards, although they accepted those for ELA).

Refusal to administer any Common Core-aligned state tests, like SBAC and PARCC, on the grounds that they are incompatible with locally adopted standards, is a critical component of Stotsky's proposals. She claims that state or federal money can't be withheld "because there is no state statute in any state requiring local districts to take tests that are incompatible with locally adopted, official standards and curriculum."

Stotsky says that even when states reject the federally supported national standards, "it is crucial for local school boards to also vote to eliminate Common Core's standards and any curriculum developed to address them." She maintains that "this will prevent the imposition of a federally imposed Common Core-aligned test at the local level — another possible end-run around state legislatures."

Sandra Stotsky's plan offers hope that more states and localities can replace the controversial and flawed Common Core with new standards that are as good as schoolchildren deserve.

Preschoolers

(Continued from page 1)

terrifying words in the English language are: 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'

Sebelius's speech was in part an attempt to gain financial support from the CED and its members; the other funding method she mentions is an increase in the tobacco tax.

Perhaps the most disingenuous part of Sebelius's speech is when she claims that further federal intrusion into families will result in "more of our kids realiz[ing] their fullest potential" and says it will allow us to "benefit from a new generation of innovation, entrepreneurship, poetry, discovery, art, and progress." This is said by an official of the same federal government that is pushing Common Core education standards, which spell the death knell for poetry, art, and the individual creativity that leads to discovery, innovation, and entrepreneurship because students are allowed to learn only what is tested on standardized tests.

RTT Early Learning Challenge

The Obama administration's Race To The Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) has awarded over \$1 billion to supposedly "provide a strong start for our nation's youngest children." At the Dept. of Education website it states: "RTT-ELC supports states in their systemic efforts to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of existing early learning and development programs across multiple funding streams that support children from birth through age five." (Ed.gov)

As with Common Core Race to the Top grants, ELC-winning states had to jump through federal hoops in order to be considered winners; they will remain under federal scrutiny, having been given mandates about how awarded money will be spent. As with Common Core, the federal government is asserting control over decisions states should be making on their own and this will result in loss of local control.

HHS Sec. Sebelius will be replaced by Sylvia Burwell. After a stint in the

Clinton administration, Burwell moved to Microsoft where she was a key aide to Common Core's major funder and most powerful champion, Bill Gates. Observers expect that future alliances between the Depts. of Education and Health and Human Services will remain aimed at further diminishing states' rights in favor of federal bureaucratic control of individuals, families, and education.

But Is It Good For Children?

Contrary to what Sec. Sebelius and her cronies believe, parents know what is best for their children. Swedish educator Jonas Himmelstrand, writing in the *Huffington Post Canada* (11-5-13), states that "the Swedish approach is that the state has taken over raising children from parents through the state run day-care system." He notes that as a result of the universal preschool/daycare system in Sweden, "education outcomes are declining, teens are anxiety-ridden and misbehaving, and the quality of parenting is suffering." Swedish parents accepted the government's offer of free preschool for children from 18-months-old through kindergarten; the result has not proven good for children, families, or education. A study by Trends in International Mathematics and Science shows that "disorder in Swedish classrooms is among the worst among comparable countries." Evidence indicates that "[Swedish] children are simply not sufficiently emotionally nourished to be teachable in school."

In response to campaigns to get children out of the family home at younger and younger ages, society in general, and parents in particular, should take Jonas Himmelstrand's advice to heart:

Child care must be a parental decision based on the needs of the child, not a state decision based on politics and the economy. The state needs to remain neutral to all forms of care — daycare, home care, nanny, granny care, and neighbor care — and not support one form of care above another.

Vocational Education

(Continued from page 2)

aligned with industry certifications and would make future employment in a CTE field possible, the student may still choose college if that is desired.

In Indiana, grants are available to schools that partner with businesses to train students. Employers that hire students with job certifications can apply for a tax credit for each trained individual hired.

According to the Louisiana Dept. of Education, the Jump Start program offers students "access to state-of-the-art facilities, equipment, and professionals to prepare . . . for careers in Louisiana's high-growth job sectors" while in high school.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that of the top twenty occupations with the highest projected numeric change in employment, only two require a four-year college degree (BLS.gov). Estimates indicate that 6 million young people age 16 to 24 are neither employed nor in school.

Thea Tucker, a New Orleans high school senior, wrote an article for the *Hechinger Report* (5-13-14) titled "Why

I Wish My Guidance Counselors Would Stop Talking So Much About College." She said:

Not only does my high school tell us that we all should go to college, they force seniors to apply to college and tell us that we cannot graduate unless we have been accepted some place (although they would have no legal right to withhold a diploma). I do not even know what I want to major in if I go to college: My high school has taken us on many field trips to colleges, but we have never visited workplaces that would give us a sense of potential jobs and career paths.

An education establishment that forces all students onto a college track is no better than one that prohibits students from following the road to college and forces them into a career. Whether students prefer a college degree or a skilled labor job in their future, the decision should be left up to them and their families, not the government or the education bureaucracy.