

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 350

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

MARCH 2015

The Rush to Reauthorize NCLB

A plan to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and to revise No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is being rushed through the U.S. Congress. House education committee chairman John Kline pushed one version through his committee, hoping for quick approval on Feb. 27 by the full House.

By now the public should be aware that long bills that are fast-tracked sometimes have tricky passages and stealth consequences. H.R. 5, the “Student Success Act,” is over 600 pages long and those elected representatives who will vote on it may not have time to read it, let alone ponder the significance of its provisions and the possible intended and unintended consequences it entails.

H.R. 5 claims to be “responsible legislation to repair the nation’s broken K-12 education system by reducing the federal footprint, restoring local control, and empowering parents and education leaders to hold schools accountable.”

The bill is actually a solidification of federal power over education, an attack on parental rights, and an affront to the independence of private education.

An Attack on Private Schools

Pages 78-82 of H.R. 5 contain provisions for private schools, including the mandate that they “ensure that teachers and families of the children participate, on an equitable basis, in services and activities. . . . Such educational services or other benefits, including materials and equipment, shall be secular, neutral, and nonideological.”

As anti-Common Core activist Christel Swasey points out, “The federal government has no right to mandate that private schools must provide services that are secular and non-religious.” This is contrary to the intent of many private schools and anathema to private religious schools.

A policeman of private schools, called an “ombudsman” is introduced in H.R. 5. The document states: “The State educational agency involved shall designate an ombudsman to monitor and enforce the requirements.”

It says on page 82, the school district “must consult with private school officials and must transmit results of their ‘agreement’ to a state-appointed ombudsman.” The “agreement” includes such things as equity among public and private school students and the “ombudsman’s job, according to page 80, is to ‘monitor and enforce’ such ‘equity for private school children.’” (WhatIsCommonCore.wordpress.com, 2-21-15)

This represents an entirely new way to control and crush the independence of private schools. Since homeschools are treated as private schools under some states’ laws, this means an ombudsman will watch and have control over families who homeschool.

The Common Core Lie

While the House pretends that they want to help parents who are concerned



about Common Core, H.R. 5 actually does nothing to rein in the mess that is the national standards foisted upon all students as a gross experiment.

A report at WorldNet-Daily says, “Conservatives have been fighting Common Core national education standards for two years at the state level, but a massive bill steamrolling through Congress has the potential to cement some of the most despised elements of Common Core into federal law.” (2-9-15)

Senate Bill Is Equally Flawed

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) has promised to work with Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) to develop a bipartisan ESEA reauthorization bill to present to Senators. A draft bill in the Senate already runs over 400 pages and cements Common Core into American education just as much as the House bill.

Lindsey Burke of the Heritage Foundation says both the House and Senate bills “fail to adequately reduce federal intervention in education, and as such, represent a missed opportunity for advancing conservative principles.” (Breitbart.com, 2-11-15)

(See *Rush to Reauthorize*, page 4)

Profiting From Charter Schools

In North Carolina, businessman Baker Mitchell runs charter schools and those same schools rent or lease property and buy supplies from a company he owns. “Every year millions of public education dollars flow through Mitchell’s chain of four nonprofit charter schools to for-profit companies he controls.”

Charter schools are privately run but government-funded. They are run by boards that are not responsible to the public. There is sometimes no accountability to the public and little transparency in how money is spent.

It is reported that in the past six years, “Mitchell’s two companies have taken in close to \$20 million in fees and rent — some of the schools’ biggest expenses. That’s from audited financial statements for just two schools.” Mitchell has since opened two additional schools. At all his schools:

The schools buy or lease nearly everything from companies owned by Mitchell. Their desks. Their computers. The training they provide to teachers. Most of the land and buildings. Unlike with traditional school districts, at Mitchell’s charter schools there’s no competitive bidding.

In individual states, charter schools are one way to get a piece of the public education payoff pie. Baker Mitchell has been involved in groups pushing for relaxation of rules regarding charter schools.

Mitchell is a politically connected individual. He and legislators who side with him got N.C. charter schools removed from the control of the State Board of Education. It is conceivable that this could be a positive thing because in some states the board of education has been reluctant to allow competition that charters provide. But when charters are removed from oversight by the state board, there needs to be other specific, tight, and comprehensive public oversight put in place.

“In 2013, the state legislature passed a sweeping charter school bill pushed by Mitchell that loosened oversight and regulation.” The new law also relaxed requirements for teacher certification. It gave the owners of property used by charter schools, like Mitchell, the privilege of paying no county or city property tax.

Passage of the law was influenced by charter school owners and supporters and by financial incentives determined

(See *Charter Schools*, page 4)



Parents Against the Common Core Enters the Fight

The new organization called “Parents Against the Common Core” aims to assist those who wish to fight Common Core. It represents a broad base of grassroots activists who know that Common Core is the wrong direction for American education. Parents from many states, in cooperation with American Principles in Action, started Parents Against the Common Core as a resource for Americans who are increasingly “frustrated with Common Core and the related assessments, which were forced on an unwilling populace by bureaucratic institutions and corporate interest groups.” American Principles in Action is part of the American Principles Project, which educates and advocates for “public policy solutions that respect and affirm: human life from conception to natural death; the union of one man and one woman as the definition of marriage; the freedom to practice and proclaim religion; authentic economic progress for working Americans; education in service of the comprehensive development of the person; and, the legacy of immigrants in contributing to the American story.” (AmericanPrinciplesProject.org)

The Parents Against the Common Core website provides state-by-state information about everything from how individual states adopted Common Core (CC) to the status of CC in each state, including the current progress of any legislation that might curtail the use of CC.

Members of the Advisory Board of Parents Against the Common Core are

mothers who became engaged in education policy once their children started being affected by Common Core. They are accidental activists who began by acting in the best interests of their own children and are now sharing what they know to protect the right to a good education for all American children. They include Jenni White of Restore Oklahoma’s Public Education; Heidi Huber of Ohioans Against Common Core; Heather Crossin of Hoosiers Against Common Core; and Gretchen Logue of Missouri Education Watchdog and the Missouri Coalition Against the Common Core. The Heartland Institute’s Joy Pullmann is also featured at the website.

Jenni White points out that “the moms and dads, the parents, who have studied [Common Core] know much more about it than even the policy wonks.”

“The Common Core is not about raising student achievement. It’s about power and control being sought by corporations, the federal government, a whole slew of big giants,” says Erin Tuttle. She makes the case that CC is not just a public school issue but is undermining private, Catholic schools, and other religion-based options in education, and will even change homeschooling.

Heidi Huber states that parents must “reclaim that first and final authority over their child and this is the window to do it.” She says, “Once this closes, once they turn that machine on, your opportunity is lost forever. [Parents must] act now, reclaim their classrooms, and reseat

their authority over their child’s, moral and academic education.”

The Top Ten Reasons to Reject Common Core

According to Parents Against the Common Core, there are ten reasons to reject Common Core:

1. There is no evidence to support the claim that the centralization of national academic standards raises student achievement. International tests show no correlation between countries with centralized standards and high test scores. Countries with and without centralized standards rank in both the top and the bottom in student achievement.
2. The adoption process was flawed. State legislators were not involved in the process and “we the people” were not given a voice. The adoption of the Common Core was done quickly and quietly through State Boards of Education without proper notice to the public or input from teachers and parents.
3. It’s unconstitutional. There is no legitimate role established for the federal government in setting state education policy. The U.S. Department of Education exceeded its authority by making federal grants and waivers contingent on the adoption of the Common Core standards and related assessments.
4. The standards are not of high quality. The Common Core standards were not ranked as the top set of

(See *Common Core*, page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

Bryn Mawr women's college in Pennsylvania has clarified its admissions policies in order to accept transgender women and "individuals who live and identify as women at the time of application."

Bryn Mawr joins Mills, Mount Holyoke, and Scripps Colleges to clarify that they are not moving toward co-education; males who identify as males and females who identify as males are still unwelcome. But males who identify as female are eligible for admission.

In 2014, a Mount Holyoke announcement stated that if a male who identified as a female were admitted, and while at Mount Holyoke decided to identify as a male, the student would be welcome to finish his studies. Also encouraged to apply are "those whose gender identity is unclear or does not fit into the traditional male-female binary." (*Inside Higher Ed*, 9-3-14 & 2-10-15)

A recent Gallup poll found that "more than half the country's teachers are not engaged in their work." Poll results show that only 30% of full-time teachers feel engaged, while 57% feel "not engaged." A further 13% reported feeling "actively disengaged" and say they "act out their unhappiness in ways that undermine what their co-workers accomplish." (*Education Week*, 1-28-15)

Teachers unions in New York State have been dealt a blow with the arrest of Speaker of the New York State Assembly Sheldon Silver, who has been a great friend to them. He is charged with five counts of corruption related to kickbacks; so far no kickbacks identified are linked to public education. (EIAonline.com, 1-26-15)

The "Enhancing Educational Opportunities for All Act" introduced by Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) and Congressman Luke Messer (R-IN) would make education funds follow the child to whatever school parents choose and expand Section 529 savings accounts to cover K-12 education expenses. (Lee.Senate.gov, 1-29-15)

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

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Single-Sex Classrooms in Jeopardy

The state ranking of Charles Drew Elementary School near Fort Lauderdale, Florida went from a D to a C over a two-year period after 25% of classes were changed to single-sex, teaching boys and girls in separate classrooms.

Single-sex classrooms improve the academic and behavioral performance of both boys and girls for a variety of reasons. There is less time wasted showing off for the opposite sex; girls feel more free to offer answers to questions; and boys feel less inhibited by the more mature level of "bookishness" girls often exhibit in school.

Student outcomes have improved in other Broward County schools and in places like Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia.

Why single-sex programs are beneficial and proving that they work is complicated. The *New York Times* reports that "Janet Hyde, a psychologist at the University of Wisconsin in Madison who analyzed 184 studies covering 1.6 million children around the globe, said the studies showing increased academic performance often involved other factors that could not be disentangled from the effects of the single-gender component."

Large scale research studies of single-sex programs have not been done in the U.S. One study in Korea showed improvement for males but credited them to "increases in student effort and study-time." (NBER.org, 12-2014)

The National Association for Sin-

gle Sex Education (SingleSexSchools.org) stresses that where successful outcomes occur, "schools did much more than simply put girls in one room and boys in another." They state that: "Teachers should be trained in best practices for reaching their students, male or female, and know how to elicit the best results in these specialized classrooms that benefit students by recognizing the biological and cognitive differences between the sexes."

Many Anecdotes, Few Research Studies

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania examined schools in Seoul, South Korea where students are randomly assigned either to single-gender or to coed high schools. It must be noted that in Seoul, assignment is truly random and there is no allowance for parental opt-out. Such an arrangement would be illegal in the U.S. where any single-sex classrooms assignment must be agreed to by

the parents.

Researchers found that males and females showed good outcomes from their single-sex environment, stating:

Our analyses show that single-sex schools are causally linked with both college entrance exam scores and college-attendance rates for both boys and girls. Attending all-boys schools or all-girls schools, rather than attending coeducational schools, is significantly associated

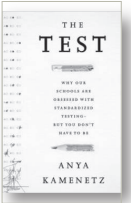
(See *Single-Sex Classrooms*, page 4)



Book of the Month



The Test: Why Our Schools Are Obsessed with Standardized Testing — But You Don't Have to Be, Anya Kamenetz, 2015, Public Affairs Books, \$25.99



"Teaching to the test is failing," according to author and NPR reporter Anya Kamenetz. Parents and educators agree with her. The test-centric education children are receiving in public schools has devolved into a race for good test scores, resulting in students being short-changed.

Common Core and the standardized tests it mandates are the latest in a series of policy missteps made by those who believe American children were poorly educated before measurement became the focus of education.

The brief tests that were formerly given to students have been replaced by in-depth, complex, and time-consuming exams given to even very young children.

Kamenetz explains the history of K-12 test-taking from the Iowa tests begun in the 1940s until the point when tests became intrusive. This began with Clinton's Goals 2000. Another turning point was when President George W. Bush and the late Sen. Edward Kennedy joined forces to come up with No Child Left Behind. Suddenly, all students had to "test" at a certain level by a certain date. Common Core tests have made the situation even worse.

Today's tests are developmentally inappropriate for children; are causing them fear and turmoil; and have spawned a revolt among concerned parents.

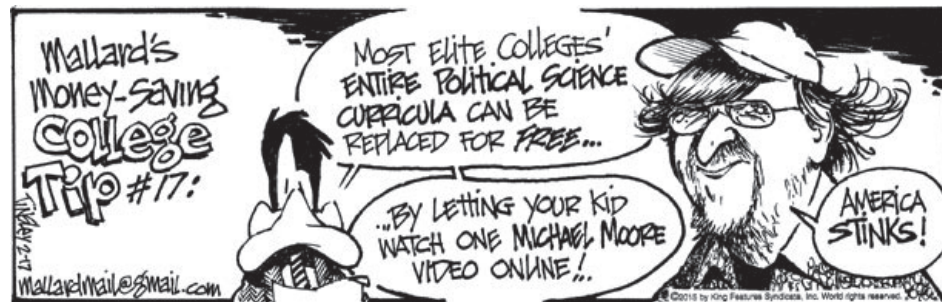
Kamenetz lists problems with testing as currently done in elementary, middle, and high schools and explains each one in depth. The problems are:

- 1) Tests test the wrong things.
- 2) Tests waste time and money.
- 3) Students end up hating school.
- 4) Teachers end up hating teaching.
- 5) Tests penalize diverse thought.
- 6) Tests cause "teaching to the test."
- 7) High stakes value of tests encourages cheating.
- 8) Tests can be "gamed" by states, districts, and students.
- 9) Tests being used are full of errors.
- 10) The next generation of tests will be even worse for students.

Any one of the above problems is cause for major concern. Taken as a whole, they should result in an immediate halt to Common Core testing in all states. Tests are a "focal point of resistance" for those in favor of local control of education and test resistance has "supporters on the right, left, and in-between," according to the author.

Kamenetz includes a section about how to opt out of tests. She suggests that the ability to opt-out of testing may soon be tested in the courts. The author also points out that testing companies are benefiting while students are not.

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Retired Superintendent Is Still on the Job

Billy Joe Ferguson decided to take underfunding of the Carroll County School District into his own hands, or his own pocketbook. He retired two years ago but remains on the job as the district superintendent of schools, drawing only his \$18,000 a year retirement pension; the difference between that and his previous salary of \$87,000 funnels back into schools to help overcome what he calls serious underfunding by the state of Mississippi.

Superintendent Ferguson began teaching in Carroll County in 1969. He's in his fourth term as superintendent and works at least 40 hours a week. He doesn't charge travel expenses and has no secretary.

In an open letter to Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant, Ferguson says his district is chronically underfunded and operates under "wretched conditions." The district covers 635 square miles and consists of one high school, one middle school, and

one elementary school that together educate 1,009 students. The student poverty rate is roughly 90%.

Bus transportation is a major hurdle for Carroll County. The student population depends on 20 buses, ten of which are fifteen years old, running eighteen bus routes. Some of the bus routes are on dirt roads.

Ferguson says the "newest building at the elementary school was constructed in 1956 and has a 23-year-old roof." When the district lost ten employees last year, Ferguson replaced them with individuals who were willing to work for less than those they replaced.

What Gets Funded

Mississippi legislators have been unsuccessful in ditching Common Core standards. "Gov. Phil Bryant, Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves and House Speaker Philip Gunn — all Republicans — have expressed displeasure with Mississippi's

(See *Still on the Job*, page 4)



FOCUS: Obama Orders 'Mental-Health' Testing for Schoolkids: Quietly unleashes cache of federal dollars under auspices of 'gun violence'

by Leo Hohmann

Reported at WND on November 8, 2014 and reprinted with permission.

Using "gun violence" as its cover, the Obama administration has quietly unleashed a cache of federal dollars that will be used for testing students for signs of mental health issues in K-12 schools.

Critics say personal information scooped up in the screenings will be logged into databases that will follow the child throughout his or her academic career and beyond.

Public schools, which have increasingly taken on aspects of psychiatric clinics in recent years, will get infused with more than \$150 million in federal grants to further this agenda under the auspices of Obama's 2013 executive action titled "Now is the Time to Do Something About Gun Violence."

Obama took the action following the Sandy Hook, Connecticut, school shooting, putting Vice President Joe Biden in charge of a task force on "gun violence."

These are the goals that came out of Biden's task force:

- Strengthen the background check system for gun sales
- Require background checks for all gun sales
- Pass a new, stronger ban on assault weapons
- Limit ammunition magazines to 10 rounds
- Finish the job of getting armor-piercing bullets off the streets
- Give law enforcement additional tools to prevent and prosecute gun crime
- End the freeze on gun violence research
- Make our schools safer with new resource officers and counselors, better emergency response plans and more nurturing school climates
- Ensure quality coverage of mental health treatment, particularly for young people.

The last two measures are where the mental health screenings for students come into play.

On Sept. 22, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell announced \$99 million in new federal grants to school districts for mental health services. The money will be used "to train new mental health providers, help teachers and others recognize mental health issues in youth and connect them to help and increase access to mental health services for young people."

On Sept. 23, the U.S. Department of Education announced another \$70 million in "School Climate Transformation grants." More than half of the money

"will be used to develop, enhance, or expand systems of support for implementing evidence-based, multi-tiered behavioral frameworks for improving behavioral outcomes and learning conditions."

The goals of such measures include "connecting[ing] children, youths, and families to appropriate services and supports," and increasing "measures of and the ability to respond to mental health issues among school-aged youth."

Both HHS and DOE cited Obama's "Now is the Time" declaration as the basis for the new programs.

"The administration is committed to increasing access to mental health services to protect the health of children and communities," Burwell said.

Of the DOE's \$70 million package, \$13 million is allocated to aiding school districts in creating "high-quality school emergency plans." Another \$14 million goes toward "Project Prevent grants" for violence-plagued schools to "be used for school-based counseling services, or referrals to community-based counseling services for assistance in coping with trauma or anxiety."

Such designs hint at broader motives and agendas, reports Professor James F. Tracy in an article for Global Research:

- 1) the federal government's continued aggressive transformation of the healthcare system; and 2) psychiatry and drug manufacturers' shared mission to persuade an increasing segment of the national and global population that it has one or more undiagnosed mental or emotional 'disorders' that require analysis and treatment.

Introducing psychiatric explanations and methodologies into school environments guarantees a growing customer base for the psychiatric profession and pharmaceutical industry. Alongside government's increasing control of healthcare, the technocratic surveillance and management of everyday thought and behavior is likewise emerging as part of what is deceptively termed 'wellness.'

In reality such efforts ensure an ever-expanding bureaucracy, hand-somely line the pockets of a select few, and further normalize a culture of learned helplessness and control within an environment that already privileges conformity as a matter of routine.

A very dangerous trend

Jane Robbins, senior fellow at the American Principles Project in Washington, D.C., said the federal government's interest in testing students, not only for academic knowledge but for psychological and behavioral traits, has been a problem for many years.

"Never let a good crisis (a school shooting) go to waste, right?" Robbins told WND via email. "This appears to be part of the broader goal of focusing education less on academic knowledge and more on students' feelings, mindsets, attitudes, etc. — so-called social and emotional learning (SEL)."

She said U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan is a "huge proponent of having schools and teachers focus on these kinds of things, which they are not trained for and which are only tangentially related to academic achievement."

"It's a very dangerous trend," Robbins said.

The problem is even more concerning in light of recent attempts to create state databases of student information, which will eventually be linked together as part of the DOE's plans for a nationwide database.

Rhode Island is linking DNA collection on newborns to its education database, meaning each child will be tracked from birth to college graduation and beyond.

Also concerning to privacy rights advocates is that the state is taking the DNA collections from babies without parental consent.

In most states, parents may request a screening exemption, but only for religious reasons. In Nebraska and West Virginia, parents may not refuse screening.

\$50 million from feds for DNA grabs

So far, Rhode Island appears to be the only state connecting a child's DNA to his state education record, Robbins said. But in return for federal funds, a number of states plan to link children's health data with their student records, she noted.

In 2011, Rhode Island received a \$50 million Race to the Top Early Learning grant from the U.S. departments of Education, and Health and Human Services.

In its grant application, the Rhode Island Department of Education said it would link the state's newborn DNA database, KIDSNET, to the state's K-12 school database.

Anita Hoge, an education consultant and expert on the student assessment industry, says the move to incorporate federally funded mental health screening into local schools is disconcerting.

"This is much worse than most people believe," Hoge said in an email. "First of all, schools will apply for partial hospitalization licenses so they can bill Medicaid for wrap-around mental health services. Then outside people have access to the students. But, it is going to start at birth with the DNA collection too. So, there are lists of what is considered an 'at risk' child. And it will conform to the subjective observations of both teachers and professional psychologists and psychiatrists."

Hoge said similar measures were proposed during the Clinton administration when the merits of "Hillarycare" — Clinton's version of national healthcare — were being debated.

George W. Bush named his mental health screening initiative The New Freedom Initiative, which WND reported on in 2004.

Marti Oakley, a radio host and author of the blog the "PPJ Gazette," took up the issue of school mental-health screenings in July when she issued this scathing report:

The active attack on public education through the Common Core curriculum has now taken one giant step forward as Minnesota and other states passed aggressive mental-health laws directed at our children. Several additional public schools in the state will now have [mental health] clinics on site as the programs become established; clinics that will be used to aggressively label the greatest number of children possible as having one or more mental disorders. Tied to these bills are massive government subsidies and other targeted funding.

In other words, our children will be traded for dollars regardless of the lifelong damage that will be the result from the assessment of fictional mental disorders; an assessment which will follow them for the rest of their lives whether real or just imagined by a mental-health provider. Many will become dependent on the highly addictive psychotropic drugs known as neuroleptics and will suffer from a myriad of adverse side effects.

Minnesota was among the first states to jump headlong into the psychological training and testing of kids.

"Under five-year grant contracts with the department, 36 mental-health organizations will provide school-linked mental-health services to approximately 35,000 students in more than 800 schools across 257 school districts and 82 counties by 2018," according to a release by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. "More than half of those students will receive mental-health services for the first time."

Oakley asks: "Why does that statement make me cringe? Maybe it's the unfettered access to more than 35,000 students and the ensuing data mining that will also be relentlessly conducted and stored in permanent lifetime files for easy access by insurance companies, federal and state agencies, and eventual employers."

Leo Hohmann is a news editor for WND. He has been a reporter and editor at several suburban newspapers in the Atlanta and Charlotte areas, and also served as managing editor of Triangle Business Journal in Raleigh, North Carolina.



Rush to Reauthorize *(Continued from page 1)*

Burke, along with Williamson “Bill” Evers of Stanford University’s Hoover Institution and a former U.S. assistant secretary of education; Theodor Rebarber, CEO of AccountabilityWorks; Sandra Stotsky, professor emerita at University of Arkansas; and Ze’ev Wurman, former senior policy adviser with the U.S. Department of Education, released a joint statement regarding legislation pending in Congress. They state:

The current drafts, both the Senate and the House versions, do not return authority to the states and localities or empower parents. The ESEA has evolved from what was described at the outset in 1965 as a measure to help children from low-income families into an instrument of testing mandates and federal control of public K-12 education and, increasingly, of private education as well.

The Senate bill may include an amendment by Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) that prohibits the federal government from funding Common Core. Anita Hoge of Pennsylvania Against Common Core says, “All they’re doing is repeating what’s already in the General Education Provisions Act, section 432, and what that says is the federal government can’t direct

or supervise curriculum. So when you look at the Roberts bill, it says the same thing.” (WND.com, 2-9-15) The language won’t do anything to stop the states from implementing Common Core.

Education Activist Mercedes Schneider suggested in an email to Sen. Alexander that he should let ESEA and NCLB expire. She says, it is “time to curb the federal role. ESEA is 15 years off track and has been punishing American public education since it became NCLB.”

Schneider told Alexander, “It looks like your 400 rushed pages will only burden states and erase state control over education as you write in that money follows the student.” (WND.com, 2-9-15)

American parents are watching what their legislators are doing. Citizens were fooled once with lies about “rigorous,” “internationally benchmarked,” and improved standards. Although some may be suffering from reform fatigue, the Common Core debacle has taught them that things aren’t always as rosy as they are painted to be and that they can’t trust anyone but themselves to know what is best for their children.

Editor’s note: Just prior to publication of the *Education Reporter*, the House withdrew H.R. 5 in response to citizen complaints but it could return to the floor at any time.

Charter Schools *(Continued from page 1)*

by federal dollars that the Obama administration awards to states “based in part on their openness to charter schools.”

The top education adviser to North Carolina Republican Gov. Pat McCrory, says he doesn’t have anything against entrepreneurship, but he doesn’t think it belongs in the arena of education.

In North Carolina, news outlets and the governor want to know the “salaries and other financial details” of Mitchell’s companies. At Gov. McCrory’s urging, “the State Board of Education has gone beyond what the law requires and is requiring schools to submit salary information for employees of charter-management companies.”

But Mitchell is fighting that requirement, saying he believes release of those figures would be “overregulation.” Although his schools submitted basic bud-

get documents, they “withheld information on management-company finances, stating that the board ‘does not possess individual salaries paid by any private corporation that furnishes services.’” But the private corporation in question is Mitchell’s own corporation and it’s doubtful he can’t access the information.

In Mitchell’s schools, there are surveillance cameras in every classroom. Mitchell told a reporter “the cameras give administrators the ability to observe teachers in action and offer them tips and coaching.”

Determining whether there are positive educational outcomes at the schools that Mitchell built is complicated by their newness and by positive test results possibly being more an indication of selectivity than teaching or administrative quality. (*Raleigh News & Observer* and ProPublica.org, 10-15-14)

Common Core *(Continued from page 1)*

standards within the United States by the Fordham Institute. By adopting the Common Core standards, many states sacrificed quality for federal compliance. Top mathematicians have warned that the lack of math content in the Common Core standards will place American students two years behind their peers in high-performing countries by eighth grade and further weaken America’s international competitiveness.

5. The Common Core standards are “instruction-based standards” that limit how content will be taught to students. Teachers will be forced to use instructional strategies that are experimental and have not been proven to raise student achievement, and that in many cases have even proven to be failures. The Center for Education Policy at George Washington University concluded in a recent compendium evaluating sixty pieces of research used to support the Common

Core standards that there is no evidence to support the claim that they will improve student achievement. See the full report in the Feb. 10, 2015 “Compendium of Research on the Common Core State Standards” at www.cep-dc.org.

6. The Common Core standards diminish the amount of literature read in English class in favor of informational texts. Data from international tests, such as PISA, show a strong correlation between higher literacy scores and students who read more complex literature. The same cannot be said about informational texts.

7. The federal government is collecting massive amounts of personally identifiable information on students. Many states have signed agreements with federally funded testing consortia to administer required student assessments. The consortia have signed agreements with the U.S. Department of Education promising

Single-Sex Classrooms *(Continued from page 2)*

with higher average scores on Korean and English test scores. Compared with coeducational schools, single-sex schools have a higher percentage of graduates who moved on to four-year colleges. (*Demography*, 10-2012)

Unfortunately, this study done in Korea offers little proof for those who propose more single-sex classrooms here. The U.S. must offer parents the option of single-sex or traditional classes and this skews results. Also, the Korean education system is simply too different from American schools to translate well. For example, Korean students go to school all day and then study at private institutes well into the night to prepare for the truly high-stakes testing that virtually determines their future life and lifestyle.

ACLU Against Single-Sex Classrooms

The ACLU has filed suit against four Florida school districts largely due to their separating some boys and girls into separate classrooms.

Now the Obama administration is issuing guidance for school districts regarding single-sex education that many fear will effectively end it.

According to the *New York Times*, the new federal guidelines allow that “schools may set up such classes if they can provide evidence that the structure will improve academics or discipline in a way that coeducational measures cannot.” But, the guidelines specifically

state that “evidence of general biological differences is not sufficient to allow teachers to select different teaching methods or strategies for boys and girls.” (*New York Times*, 12-1-14)

It is expected that schools would be unable to unequivocally prove that improvement is due to single-sex classrooms or that schools offering single-sex classrooms would be able to afford to defend themselves from an onslaught of lawsuits.

The ACLU has filed similar lawsuits in Texas, Idaho, and Wisconsin. They have successfully stopped single-sex education in Louisiana and West Virginia.

As Sen. Barbara Mikulski and former Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2012:

No one is arguing that single-sex education is the best option for every student. But it is preferable for some students and families, and no one has the right to deny them an option that may work best for a particular child. Attempts to eliminate single-sex education are equivalent to taking away students’ and parents’ choice about one of the most fundamentally important aspects of childhood and future indicators of success — a child’s education.

Hutchison and Mikulski concluded:

To limit or eliminate single-sex education is irresponsible. To take single-sex education away from students who stand to benefit is unforgivable.

Still on the Job *(Continued from page 2)*

use of Common Core academic standards. However, with an independent state superintendent of education and Board of Education, it’s unclear how much influence the Legislature will have on repealing or revising the standards.” (*Hattiesburg American*, 1-4-15)

Teaching Common Core standards has a huge financial impact on schools. They must spend to re-train teachers and must replace textbooks with those aligned to Common Core. In his letter to the governor, Ferguson stated: “We do not have enough money to fully upgrade textbooks.” In some cases they are making do with printouts from the internet.

One huge expense was averted when Mississippi withdrew from the PARCC Common Core testing consortium. (*Clarion-Ledger*, 1-16-15) The state will now “seek competitive, multi-year bids.”

But Gov. Bryant has committed \$3 million to pay for early childhood education programs. In an interview with the Associated Press, Bryant laments that Mississippi can’t afford a statewide pre-kindergarten program. He doesn’t seem to have a high regard for parents’ care for their preschool children when he states:

access to the student data collected through the assessments.

8. The standards are costly. National implementation of the Common Core standards and assessments will cost an estimated \$15 billion across the participating states, according to the Pioneer Institute.

9. States with the earliest implementation of the Common Core standards, such as Kentucky, have seen a decline in student achievement on the National Assessment of Education

“We just don’t need to set ’em in front of a television and feed ’em Froot Loops.”

The millions of dollars spent on the failed Head Start model of early childhood education would go a long way to helping districts like Carroll County.

Gov. Bryant also makes another blooper in his interview with the Associated Press. The reporter says: “People also wonder: Who’s going to make money off charter schools?” Bryant replies: “If there is money to be made in charter schools, I haven’t figured out how that happens.” Gov. Bryant needs to read the article in this issue of *Education Reporter* about the North Carolina businessman who is doing just that.

The Hechinger Report says that in November of 2016, Mississippians will have a chance to vote on “a potential amendment to the constitution that would require the state to provide an ‘adequate and efficient system of free public schools.’” (2-2-15)

Ferguson’s letter to the governor reveals a ludicrous situation that could occur. He says state law mandates that if his district fails, the governor “will hire a \$200,000 conservator to come and resurrect us!”

Progress, showing a lack of results from the standards.

10. The new Common Core pilot tests were plagued with major technical difficulties and complaints from teachers regarding the content. Parents are upset that the Common Core increases the amount of time spent on testing and robs the classroom of valuable instruction time.

For more information, visit the website: ParentsAgainstTheCommonCore.com