

# EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 351

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

APRIL 2015

## Opting Out of Testing

As the standardized testing season begins at public schools, districts are greeting them in a variety of ways. Some districts respect parental objections to Common Core testing and have made it easy for them to opt their children out of testing. In other areas, parents have been threatened in order to make their children participate.

In Detroit, parents at an elementary school were sent a letter threatening to suspend students whose parents failed to attend meetings to prepare for “a big Common Core related standardized test.”



(DailyCaller.com, 3-2-15)

Because of misinformation about Common Core, parents and the public are learning that they can't trust what they're told by the education establishment and media outlets. A recent article in the *New York Times* erroneously states: “The Common Core standards, a set of challenging learning goals designed to better prepare students for college, were developed by a coalition of states.” (3-2-15)

Common Core standards were not created by states, but instead by a group of non-educators, at the behest of two Washington, D.C. lobbying groups, which own the copyright on them. The standards are flawed and were never field tested.

The two main Common Core tests being given to students, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), were developed using a \$345 million grant from the federal government. Once that money is used up, Common Core tests will cost states more than any previous standardized testing.

Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia will use either the PARCC or SBAC tests. (*Education Week*, 2-20-15) A few states will use American Institute for Research (AIR) tests, which were not developed with federal money but are similar to the others and are based on Common Core.

### Getting Trained to Opt Out

In January, United Opt Out, a group concerned about over-testing of students, held a three-day conference in Florida aimed to help parents understand how they could prevent their children from coming under the pressure of taking these developmentally inappropriate standardized tests.

A leader of United Opt Out, who is also a parent and a former teacher says, “The testing crowds out anything meaningful.” *Education Week* reports that the Washington-based Center for American Progress found that “some students take as many as 20 standardized assessments per year.” (*Education Week*, 1-28-15)

One United Opt Out attendee described the anti-test movement, saying, “This is a [diverse] movement driven by grassroots activists in local communities.” Opposition to Common Core testing is coming from parents on the left and right of the political spectrum, from Democrat and Republican politicians, and from teachers unions opposed to tying testing to teacher evaluations.

Parents use opting out of testing as a way to remove their children from Common Core (CC) because it is the only option left to many. Most oppose CC standards, federally mandated data-mining of children's personal information, and the loss of local control of education.

Suggested opt-out actions include having students begin the test but then refuse to answer any questions. Another strategy is to keep children home on test days, but that can result in truancy problems because testing goes on for so many days.

There are testing opt out organizations in at least 40 states.

### One State Allowed to Experiment

In February, the U.S. Department of Education agreed to allow New Hampshire to pilot a program in four school districts that is a variation of what other districts must follow according to No Child Left Behind and Common Core mandates. The four districts in New Hampshire's Performance Assessment for Competency Education (PACE) program will administer the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) Common Core tests once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school. This

(See *Testing*, page 4)

## Chicago's Mayor Celebrates Victory Over Teachers Union

Reelected on April 7 to a second term as mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel has another opportunity to reform the dysfunctional Chicago public schools, which were left in shambles by Arne Duncan, the current U.S. Secretary of Education. Emanuel won by a surprisingly close vote of 56% to 44% for his Mexican-born challenger, Jesus “Chuy” Garcia, who was recruited and supported by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU).

In Emanuel's first term, CTU president Karen Lewis launched a series of Alinskyite attacks on the mayor for what she termed his “corporate” agenda that included charter schools, teacher evaluations, and a longer school day. The tough-talking Lewis faced off against the notoriously abrasive Emanuel, who had previously made heads roll as political enforcer for Presidents Clinton and Obama.

Lewis led a two-week teachers strike which delayed the opening of school in September 2012. In 2013, when Emanuel announced the closing of nearly 50 underused, poor-performing neighborhood schools, Lewis instigated a firestorm of opposition and predicted catastrophe for the affected students and their families.

But subsequent studies, including one by the University of Chicago, have shown that displaced students are better off than they were before. Although Chicago's overall student performance remains abysmal, the transferred students “are doing better academically, attendance rates

are up, and rates of misconduct have decreased,” according to district officials. Mayor Emanuel claims the overall high-school graduation rate has risen to 69%, as compared to 58% when Arne Duncan was in charge of Chicago's public schools.

The Chicago school district pressured

parents to move their children to a designated “welcoming school,” but parents were allowed to make the ultimate decision and didn't always choose the school with the highest academic rating. The researchers noted that “most people don't just judge schools based on test scores,” but “factors such as location, after-school care, and extracurricular activities” were also important to parents.

The mayor's opponents want to change the school board from one appointed by the mayor to an elected, representative body. A non-binding referendum to take school board power away from the mayor was passed by voters in over 30 wards in early 2015.

According to a report by researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the mayor-appointed “board engaged in questionable financial arrangements and thus was a poor steward of public resources.” On April 17, Mayor Emanuel's hand-picked school CEO, Barbara Byrd-Bennett, was forced to step down while federal prosecutors investigate a \$20.5 million no-bid contract she awarded to her previous employer for “leadership development services.”



## African-American Homeschoolers Thriving

Paula Penn-Nabrit homeschooled her three sons in the 1990s. In 2003, she wrote a book about her family's experience, *Morning by Morning: How We Home-Schooled Our African-American Sons to the Ivy League*. Her sons attended Princeton, Harvard, Amherst, and the University of Pennsylvania. At that time, her family's decision to homeschool was looked upon with skepticism by others in the black community. But more and more African-American families are choosing to homeschool.

According to the National Home Education Research Institute, an estimated 220,000 African-American children are currently being homeschooled and the number is increasing. This demographic currently makes up 10% of the homeschooling population, while African-American children make up 16% of public school students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Families choose to homeschool for a variety of reasons. Traditional rationale includes dissatisfaction with available

schools and the ability to include religion in the curriculum.

Some black families are opting for home education in order to escape the low expectations they believe public schools have for their children. Temple University professor Ama Mazama has homeschooled her own children for 12 years. She says that black children are sometimes “treated as though they are not as intelligent and cannot perform as well, and therefore the standards for them should be lower.”

Mazama's research into black families who homeschool shows that some chose to offer “more detailed descriptions of ancient African civilizations and accounts of successful African people throughout history.” Parental choice of curriculum and the ability to focus on particular subjects is one of the benefits

of homeschooling.

### Motivated to Homeschool Boys

Penn-Nabrit and her husband “elected to teach [their sons] the subject areas they knew well.” For the “remaining science and math courses, they hired black, mostly male, graduate students from Ohio State University to take over — in large part so that the boys had exposure to successful people who looked like them.”

Penn-Nabrit says, “Most black people go to school and never have a teacher that looks like them, and this is particularly true for black boys.” According to the Dept. of Education, fewer than 2% of current classroom teachers are African-American males.

Some African-American families

(See *Homeschoolers*, page 4)



## EDUCATION BRIEFS

**A New Hampshire father who was arrested in May of 2014, whose conviction for disorderly conduct was pursued by local authorities for seven months after he spoke at a school board meeting, is suing the police for civil rights violations.**

The father objected to his daughter's assignment to read a book that "contained graphic descriptions of a violent sexual assault." His 14-year-old daughter said, "I just watched my father get arrested because he broke the two-minute rule at a Board of Education meeting." The charges were eventually dropped by a judge but dad William Baer says his lawsuit is as much about stopping the national trend to silence parents as it is about seeking justice for himself. (WND.com, 2-25-15)

**In March, Toyota sponsored a "LGBTQ-Friendly Online College Fair," presented by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.** It was focused on helping lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students find colleges and universities that are "inclusive and supportive." The online fair enabled prospective students to ask "recruiters, advisors, and current college students for advice on everything from filling out financial aid forms to which clubs to join on campus." The fifty participating colleges included Duke, Cal Poly Pomona, San Diego State, Ohio State, and the Univ. of Pennsylvania. (GLSEN.org, 3-19-15)

**In a victory for the college, the Supreme Court has "nullified a federal court ruling against the University of Notre Dame on the Health and Human Services contraception mandate and sent it back for reconsideration by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals."** The appeals court must now reconsider Notre Dame's position against providing employees with health care coverage that includes contraceptives, abortion drugs, and sterilization. A university spokesman says, "Notre Dame continues to challenge the federal mandate as an infringement on our fundamental right to the free exercise of our Catholic faith." (CatholicNewsAgency.com, 3-9-15)

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.

Web site: <http://www.eagleforum.org>  
E-mail: [education@eagleforum.org](mailto:education@eagleforum.org)

## Don't Close the Zoos

A February 13, 2015 article in *Outside* magazine demonstrates just how off base an observer can be. The author of "The Case for Closing Zoos" alleges that because his ten-year-old son was engaged while watching a televised special about Orcas and found it "gripping," that zoos no longer need to exist. He suggests that watching animal shows on YouTube or PBS can replace trips to the zoo.

The assumption that no child needs to see zoo animals since his own child's response was to "light up in front of the screen" seems to represent a shallow thought process. It would be interesting to know if the author had taken his son to a zoo at any point prior to the occasion when he decided that children don't benefit from visiting zoos. Would his son have been as interested in animals had he never been to a zoo?

While technology can provide experiences, it's a mistake to believe it negates the necessity of real-life experiences and interactions.

### Zoo Trip vs. YouTube

Children from all economic backgrounds benefit from school field trips and family visits to the zoo. In some big cities, like St. Louis, Washington, and Chicago, zoo admission is free.

The 2013 Pew Research Internet Project found only 54% of lower-income Americans, those making less than \$30,000 a year, have broadband internet access at home (*Education Week*, 2-4-15). Economically disadvantaged families are less likely to be able to watch internet videos and cable television shows about animals.

To assume that children would be equally inspired by a video of an animal as by actually seeing the animal at a zoo is possibly a miscomprehension of child development. Also, research shows that screen time has a negative affect on young children.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends no screen time for children younger than two and limited time for older children. The AAP website states, "Studies have shown that excessive media use can lead to attention problems, sleep and eating disorders, and obesity."

### The Zoo "Test"

Why is it important for children to be interested in animals? The most obvious reason is that animals engage the imagination and inquisitiveness of children. If we want to encourage children to appreciate the natural world, and end

up having a certain percentage of them become scientists, we must expose them to the wonders around them, including exotic animals they won't see in their neighborhood.

Visually experiencing the majesty of animals at a zoo is an amazing experience for children. The *Outside* magazine author cites a survey of 3,000 children who visited the London Zoo. He complains that only 34% of them showed "positive learning" or "gained new information."

Being discouraged that over 1,000 children left knowing new facts is an example of missing the point and becoming data-obsessed, in the same manner as those who want school to become nothing but test results. So what if many of the children were only amazed by the zoo animals and didn't get the facts down? Should they have instead stayed in front of a tv screen that day or sitting at a desk in a classroom? One wonders how many of the kids had a bad day at the zoo.

### Why Close Zoos?

According to the *Outside* author, "The Association of Zoos and Aquariums reports that its 228 members are actively working to save 30 species." Apparently that isn't good enough.

As evidence that all zoos should close, he reaches all the way back to a 1982 report that some animals at the San Diego zoo experienced "malnutrition, injuries from transport, and the use of anesthetics and tranquilizers." That was 33 years ago. Surely San Diego has by now made improvements.

The appropriate response to zoos and aquariums that don't properly care for their animal wards is to improve conditions, not to close them down.

### God Made the World

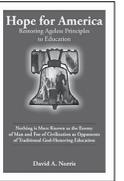
Zoos are involved in conservation of the world that God created. Children are inspired by zoos. Take a child to the zoo. Let them experience watching wolves prowl in a semi-natural habitat. Then, at home or in the classroom, read books like *The Wolves Are Back*, by Jean Craighead George and *When the Wolves Returned: Restoring Nature's Balance in Yellowstone*, by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent. These two books make conservationism come alive for children. They demonstrate how perfectly God created ecosystems and what those who were inspired by animals when they were children accomplished by their efforts to restore the perfect balance that God created.



## Book of the Month



**Hope for America: Restoring Ageless Principles to Education, by David A. Norris. Faithful Life Publishers, 2014, \$11.99**



When did the atmosphere at public schools get worse in America? Some say it was when atheists demanded that any semblance of Christian thought be removed from education. Author David Norris would agree. He says, "Parents who object to *In God We Trust* assemblies and demand that atheistic secular education be imposed on all students fit the definition of totalitarian or fascist authoritarians."

Norris continues, "Avoiding oppression of this kind caused tens of millions of immigrants from around the globe to seek refuge in America."

How did we get to the point that teaching Judeo-Christian values is prohibited at schools and parents must opt out of offensive assemblies? It began in the 60s when some studies claimed that American students ranked behind the rest of the world in education. Social activists took advantage of hysteria and began tearing down traditional belief systems, instead of improving academics.

It would make more sense for those who do not believe in the Judeo-Christian ethics on which our nation was founded to opt their children out of programs based on the Ten Commandments, for example. But that is not the way it works at schools today.

*Hope for America* offers ways we can maintain schools as places of learning and respect.

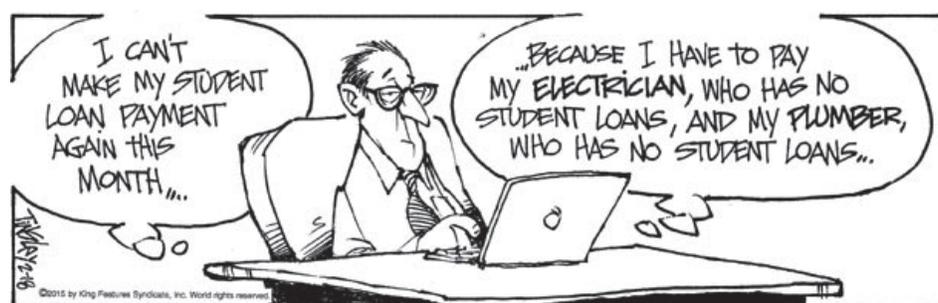
Norris suggests that citizens must elect school board members who will choose administrators who in turn will select teachers who are not afraid to support the "traditional American family, human dignity, and civil community standards."

He also says we need teachers who "oppose moral revisionism and reject any hint of instruction that could justify hatred or enmity between the sexes and races." It doesn't seem too much to ask that teachers refrain from stirring up students with calls for "social justice," which is a leftist term meaning, not justice, but instead social upheaval based on a victimhood mentality.

Norris quotes Pres. Harry Truman, who said: "The fundamental basis for this nation's laws was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai." Norris says, "The rule of law standards include the parameters for civil behavior provided by the Ten Commandments."

Government schools used to "emphasize" those Commandments, before "supremacist judges" removed them from schools and outlawed their teaching. Even the moral absolutes on which government is based are now given short shrift in education. Students are taught that some citizens are more "equal" than others by telling them that some are more special and more protected than others.

## MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



# FOCUS: The Disturbing Transformation of Kindergarten

by Wendy Lecker

*This article originally appeared in the Stamford Advocate on February 21, 2014 and is reprinted with permission.*

One of the most distressing characteristics of education reformers is that they are hyper-focused on how students perform, but they ignore how students learn. Nowhere is this misplaced emphasis more apparent, and more damaging, than in kindergarten.

A new University of Virginia (UVA) study found that kindergarten changed in disturbing ways from 1999-2006. There was a marked decline in exposure to social studies, science, music, art, and physical education and an increased emphasis on reading instruction. Teachers reported spending as much time on reading as all other subjects combined.

The time spent in child-selected activity dropped by more than one-third. Direct instruction and testing increased. Moreover, more teachers reported holding all children to the same standard.

How can teachers hold all children to the same standards when they are not all the same? They learn differently, mature at different stages — they just are not all the same, especially between the ages of 4-6.

Is this drastic shift in kindergarten the result of a transformation in the way children learn? No! A 2011 nationwide study by the Gesell Institute for Child Development found that the ages at which children reach developmental milestones have not changed in 100 years.

For example, the average child cannot perceive an oblique line in a triangle until age 5½. This skill is a prerequisite to recognizing, understanding and writing certain letters. The key to understanding concepts such as subtraction and addition is “number conservation.” A child may be able to count five objects separately but not understand that together they make the number five. The average child does not conserve enough numbers to understand subtraction and addition until 5½ or 6.

If we teach reading, writing, subtraction, and addition before children are

ready, they might memorize these skills, but they will not learn or understand them. And it will not help their achievement later on.

Child development experts understand that children must learn what their brains are ready to absorb. Kindergarten is supposed to set the stage for learning academic content when they are older. If they are going to push our kindergarten children to move faster, what does that say for the push for “educating” Pre-K?

Play is essential in kindergarten — in fact in any child under the age of 5. Through play, children build literacy skills they need to be successful readers. By speaking to each other in socio-dramatic play, children use the language they heard adults read to them or say. This process enables children to find the meaning in those words.

There is a wide range of acceptable developmental levels in kindergarten; so a fluid classroom enables teachers to observe where each child is and adjust the curriculum accordingly.

Two major studies confirmed the value of play vs. teaching reading skills to young children. Both compared children who learned to read at 5 with those who learned at 7 and spent their early years in play-based activities. Those who learned to read at 5 had no advantage. Those who learned to read later had better comprehension by age 11, because their early play experiences improved their language development.

Yet current educational policy banishes play in favor of direct instruction of inappropriate academic content and testing, practices that are ineffective for young children.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Law played a major role in changing kindergarten. Upper-grade curricula were pushed down in a mistaken belief that by learning reading skills earlier, children

would fare better on standardized tests. Subjects not tested by NCLB were de-emphasized. Lawmakers insisted that standardized tests assess reading at earlier ages, even though standardized tests are invalid for children under 8.

These changes have the harshest effect on our most vulnerable children.

The UVA study found that in schools with the highest percentage of children of color and children eligible for free-and-reduced-priced lunch, teachers had the most demanding expectations for student performance.

To make matters worse, the drafters of the Common Core ignored the research on child development. In 2010, 500 child-development experts warned the drafters that the standards called for exactly the kind of damaging practices that inhibit learning: direct instruction, inappropriate academic content, and testing.

These warnings went unheeded.

Consequently, the Common Core exacerbates the developmentally inappropriate practices on the rise since NCLB. Teachers report having to post the standards in the room before every scripted lesson, as if 5-year-olds can read or care what they say. They time children adding and subtracting, and train them to ask formulaic questions about an “author’s message.” All children are trained in the exact same skill at the same time. One teacher lamented that “there is no more time for play.” Another wrote that “these so-called educational leaders have no idea how children learn.”

It may satisfy politicians to see children perform inappropriately difficult tasks like trained circus animals. However, if we want our youngest to actually learn, we will demand the return of developmentally appropriate kindergarten.

*Wendy Lecker is a columnist for Hearst Connecticut Media Group and is the Senior Attorney at the Education Law Center.*



## All-day Kindergarten For Minnesota Kids

When Minnesota made all-day kindergarten a free option for the 2014-15 school year, more than 57,000 students enrolled. Parents of 99% of all students chose the all-day option.

During the 2013-14 school year, just 54% of kindergarteners went to school all day. The big difference is that all day kindergarten is now free; parents had to pay as much as \$4,000 in previous years.

A teacher with 43 years of experience says that this year’s kindergarten class is ahead of any she’s had in the past. She says, “They started out not knowing letters or sounds” and “[t]hey are now reading simple two- and three-word sentences.”

This has caused schools to change their first-grade curriculum because children are being taught to read earlier. (CBSlocal.com, 3-16-15)

Critics of all-day kindergarten that stresses reading and math, rather than play and art, worry that students will suffer. Play time for young children is deemed critical for the development of creativity and ingenuity.

Those in charge of education policy must pay attention to the developmental inappropriateness of young children spending long days at school focusing on academics. While spending all day in kindergarten class may seem like a good idea to parents who need childcare, it may not be in their children’s best interest because it is not age-appropriate.

tween 1990 and 2012. At private bachelor’s institutions it has almost doubled since 1987. Yet, the proportion of all employees who were full-time faculty has declined 5 to 7% at four-year colleges and 16% at community colleges between 2000 and 2012.

While students have less access to faculty members, especially full-time faculty members, they are paying for the services of administrators and their professional staffs. Since 1987, this number has more than doubled and increased at a rate twice as fast as the growth in the number of students.

The Delta report states that there is “no single smoking gun” to explain such growth in administration.

### Why So Many Administrators?

Huffington Post’s Jon Marcus cannot pin down the reasons either, claiming more resources are being devoted to such things as marketing, diversity, sustainability, security, athletic programs, and conference centers. He quotes Dan King, president of the American Association of University Administrators, who claims that government regulations and demands for such services

(See *Save Money*, page 4)

## Save Money with Adjuncts, Spend it on Bureaucrats

by Mary Grabar

*First appeared at the Manhattan Institute’s MindingTheCampus.com on March 17, 2015. Reprinted with permission.*

Jordan Schneider, like many part-time college instructors, teaches on two community college campuses in order to cobble together a living. He earns a paltry \$21,000 per year with no benefits for teaching a larger-than-normal load of four courses per semester. Non-tenure track full-time professors earn \$47,000. Established professors’ salaries have remained flat, at between \$60,000 and \$100,000. As a former instructor of English at Georgia Perimeter College and

elsewhere, these figures, from the 2014 Delta Cost Project, sound right.

In “Letter to Full-Time Faculty Members,” in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Schneider deviates from the typical call for redress through unionization, and appeals to full-time colleagues’ self-interests by arguing that a class of “super adjuncts,” paid more than regular adjuncts but less than full-time faculty (\$20,000 to \$25,000 per term with benefits), with some of the duties and voting privileges of full-time faculty, would take away administrators’ “trump cards”: the threat

of replacing full-timers with cheap adjuncts, who, along with teaching assistants, now account for half of instructional staff (up from one-third in 1987).

But the number of full-time professors on short-term contracts (like “super adjuncts”) has already increased, by 30 to 50% between 2004 and 2012.

### Goodbye, Full-Time Faculty

In spite of increasing reliance on contingent faculty, higher education costs tripled between 1975 and 2005. Tuition at public four-year colleges and universities increased nearly 160% be-



## Testing (Continued from page 1)

means students will be tested in three grades, instead of in seven grades as in the rest of the state.

In years that students are allowed by the federal government to skip the SBAC tests, they will take “performance assessments” that are written by local teachers but approved by the state. The New Hampshire Dept. of Education says such assessments “are complex, multi-part tasks that ask students to apply what they have learned in sophisticated ways.”

Students in the pilot program will be given one annual task or project in each subject. According to the state Deputy Commissioner of Education, a math project could be to consider a community initiative, like building a park, and could include “writing letters to community leaders around what the costs would be, what the pluses and minuses would be of putting the project in place, and then doing an argument both for and against that project.”

Over a decade ago, New Hampshire began the process of “implementing a competency-based system — in which students advance based upon mastery, rather than seat time.” These “competency-based tests are a highly integrated part of learning and allow students to show what they know when they are ready to do so.” Leftist Stanford researcher Linda Darling-Hammond has worked with the state on the switch to “demonstrations of proficiency.”

It remains to be seen whether the federal government will continue to allow New Hampshire’s plan for these four districts. In the meantime, “All other districts in New Hampshire remain obligated to follow traditional federal testing rules.” (NHPublicRadio.org, 3-5-15 and *Education Next*, 3-9-15)

Critics of the PACE program include those who question the efficacy of competency-based education (a new name for outcome-based education) and worry that some projects may tend to turn students into community organizers. Others are distraught that the federal government wields so much clout that only they can approve this small deviation from mandated testing.

### So Much for State and Local Control

The Colorado Board of Education voted in January to allow school districts to skip portions of the state tests because they believed “two portions of the tests sound[ed] repetitive and could be unnecessary.”

But when the state attorney general reviewed federal laws, she found that the state board did not have the authority to give that option to districts.

Attorney General Cynthia Coffman’s opinion stated: “Allowing school districts to forego administering portions of the test would mean the state is failing to meet state and federal requirements.” The attorney general wrote, “Statute mandates that as a PARCC member, the SBOE (State Board of Education) must rely upon assessments developed by PARCC.”

The attorney general found that the state board of education and the state Department of Education are powerless to change any aspect of English language arts or math testing. They are bound to do exactly what creators of the PARCC test demand “because its administration is governed — and the state is currently bound by — the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding with PARCC.”

The Colorado attorney general states that her ruling is “not intended to address how or whether Colorado should cease to be a member of the PARCC consortium.” She is only interpreting what Colorado must adhere to so long as it has a continuing relationship with PARCC.

That’s the truth about *state-determined, voluntary* participation in Common Core and its standardized testing mandates. Common Core was not created by states and continued participation is not voluntary. Neither is it desirable.

### Saying “No!”

Parents have told their representatives, school boards, and state departments of education that they are opposed to Common Core and the testing it mandates, but in most cases they are being ignored or placated. For some, opting out of tests is the last line of resistance and the one thing they can control. They intend to protect their children by not allowing them to take the tests.

A New Jersey mother of two who has become an anti-test activist told the *New York Times* that her children won’t be taking the tests. She says, “I’m refusing because we’re taking a stand against this deeply flawed policy.” (3-2-15) After months of trying to make local officials understand why she opposes the tests and to convince those in charge to take action, Christine McGoey says that “they’re just not listening.” She says, “I feel like the only thing left to do is just say no.”

## Homeschoolers (Continued from page 1)

fear that boys in public schools are sometimes misunderstood and expectations placed on them are developmentally inappropriate.

University of Georgia education professor Cheryl Fields-Smith believes that boys are sometimes expected to act more like girls and can face disciplinary action for natural behavior. Fields-Smith says, “I think black families who are in a position to homeschool can use homeschooling to avoid the issues of their

children being labeled ‘trouble makers.’”

### Homeschool Organizations

Rhonda McKnight is a single mother who homeschools her son while working full-time as a contractor for the state of Georgia. She describes her son’s curriculum as an “original mix of purchased homeschool lesson plans and lessons she’s written herself.” McKnight supplements the curriculum by enrolling her son in a homeschool collective that

## Save Money (Continued from page 3)

as remedial help and counseling are responsible. Yet, graduation rates of students at four-year bachelor’s institutions have barely inched up, from 55% to 58% since 2002.

Political science professor Benjamin Ginsberg seems to have a good diagnosis. In his 2011 *Washington Monthly* article, “Administrators Ate My Tuition,” he noted that well-paid professional bureaucrats have taken over duties once handled by faculty members on a temporary, part-time basis. Unlike faculty members, their motivation is not academic improvement, but growing the bureaucracy, with make-work projects developed at far-away conferences and retreats.

### Goodbye to Real Instruction

This is evidenced by the questionable academic value of many of the initiatives coming out of their offices. In fact, many of the programs substitute for real academic instruction. More and more money is spent on diversity, social justice, and sustainability initiatives at the expense of real teaching.

The students who can least afford such diversions, those attending community colleges, are seeing the largest shift from funding for teaching to administrative programs.

I saw this happening at Georgia Perimeter College where I was a part-time instructor from 2007 to 2010. As we were being asked to squeeze several more students into our classes (that were maxed out at 22) for the same \$2,100 per class, college president Anthony Tricoli was rallying faculty to embrace civic learning.

Around the same time, 2009, the federal government put out the 136-page report, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, for which Tricoli served as a roundtable member. The college’s Atlanta Center for Civic Engagement & Learning was one of about 100 participating organizations that included campuses, non-profits, and government agencies. However, real “civic learning” is the farthest from the report’s objectives.

Model centers, such as at the University of Maryland and Salt Lake Com-

munity College, show students working in soup kitchens, reading to school children, and cleaning up nature trails. Organizations such as Campus Compact (which GPC joined) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (the lead writer of *A Crucible Moment*) provide direction. One instructional ASC&U video shows a statistics professor “collaborating” with an “anti-poverty” representative on a lesson publicizing free tax preparation services in target zip codes for Earned Income Tax Credits. (If there is any doubt about the agenda, a “social justice” sign appears prominently.)

Instead of formal essays or research papers, students write “reflection papers.”

At my college, the associate vice president for civic engagement and service learning, attorney Deborah Gonzalez, made \$104,000 for offering “infrastructure and resources, to share best practices and technical assistance . . . , to [help faculty] implement initiatives to help their students engage in their communities, both locally and globally” — all while presumably helping students strengthen their “academic goals and objectives.” In response to her call for courses with a “Civic-engagement or Service-learning component,” a colleague shared having students serve as docents at the Margaret Mitchell House. I failed to see how such activities, whether “global” or ushering at a local historic site, would help students struggling with grammar.

The grand new Center for Civic Engagement and Service-Learning opened in 2010 with much fanfare and a keynote address by former President Jimmy Carter. The program listed a good number of individuals drawing salaries or partial salaries for their efforts: the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Executive Director, the Service-Learning Coordinator, the Administrative Secretary, and eleven faculty members.

In 2012, however, Tricoli was forced to resign over a \$25 million budget deficit; he is now suing, charging conspiracy to ruin his reputation. I don’t know what percentage the civic engagement initiative represented, but such programs are not cheap.

Rather than pleading for part of the increasingly smaller portion of budgets allocated to academic instruction, it seems that Schneider and others ought to be demanding the ouster of bureaucrats and the restoration of higher education to its rightful purpose.

*Mary Grabar taught English at the college level for 20 years and has authored several books, including Exiled and Bill Ayers: Teaching Revolution. Grabar is currently a visiting fellow at the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization. She is the founder of DissidentProf.com.*

