

Doing Reform Wrong in Newark

In 2010, three people came together to change Newark, New Jersey public schools. They didn't work with parents or local educators to come up with a plan. In fact, the public was first made aware of the reform project when it was announced on a national television show.

The scheme was hatched by then-mayor Cory Booker and Governor Chris Christie, along with the money man, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. It involved "reforms" that changed how families choose schools for their children. Reformers sought to reward teachers for merit and to eliminate the practice of rewards based on seniority. With the amount of money spent and the sacrifices made, there could have been multiple successes had the plan been properly implemented. But the top-down effort met with resistance and criticism, and was an overall failure.

Dale Russakoff details the Newark debacle in her book, *The Prize: Who's In Charge Of America's Schools*. She was a reporter for the *Washington Post* for 28 years and she exposed the pitfalls of the attempted Newark reforms during an interview on National Public Radio on September 21, 2015.

Bypassing Teachers and Parents

The plan called One Newark began in 2010, and came as a surprise to Newark educators, parents, students, and community leaders who first heard about it when it was announced on Oprah Winfrey's television show.

Although Newark residents agreed that change was needed at their schools, the reformers who descended on Newark failed to ask for advice or suggestions from those already engaged in efforts to teach students. Instead of involving those who knew best what might help high-poverty and crime-ridden neighborhoods of the city, the reformers told citizens what was to become of their schools, neighborhoods, and families.

Russakoff says, "There were a lot of people, including some very skilled, experienced teachers, who deeply understood the needs of the children in Newark who would have been eager to be part of that conversation." According to her, "Not only were they insulted that they were left out, there was an agenda that was crafted that didn't have the benefit of their really important insights into what was needed in Newark."

Parents weren't consulted before the project was put in place. Parents were forced to go online to sign up children to attend schools according to an "algorithm" determined by outsiders. Children were moved from neighborhood schools, to which they could safely and easily

walk, and assigned to schools whose locations sometimes involved walking through dangerous, crime-infested areas. Reformers provided no transportation system.

Locals Need Not Apply

Zuckerberg donated \$100 million. This was tied to the Foundation for Newark's Future, which aimed to raise a second \$100 million from contributors. Seats on the Foundation were originally given only to donors who gave at least \$10 million. When there were too few, the requirement was reduced to \$5 million. But this still "meant that virtually no one from Newark could afford to serve on this foundation that was trying to change the Newark schools."

This mistake alienated locals, including "a number of local foundations in Newark that had been involved for years in education," that were forced to sit on the sidelines because they didn't have budgets that allowed them to make a \$5 million annual gift.

Parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders, "really intelligent, smart, committed people who had been in the fray for years in the lives of children in education," had no say in changes made or how money was spent. Instead, "the board decided to spend the money the way the wealthy donors wanted it spent."

The money was allocated in a "business model, top-down reform." The intent was to increase the number of charter schools; to eliminate "weak" teachers, as determined by peer evaluations and student test scores; to reward better teachers; and to run the district "more like a business."

Failed Teacher Contracts

Russakoff explains that teachers, the backbone of education, are especially unhappy with Newark's reform results. They got a new contract that gave a few small raises for what outsiders decided was improved performance, but in return they are forced to work longer hours. This is not what they would have chosen to improve student outcomes had it been left up to them or if anyone had asked what they wanted.

Zuckerberg expected to reform teacher contracts and designated \$50 million to that end. The plan was to reward better teachers and fire bad teachers. Zuckerberg was apparently unaware of New Jersey law and teachers union contracts. His plan backfired when legislators negotiated some accountability in teacher contracts but only achieved that by keeping intact seniority, making it impossible to fire teachers or to have



Fraternity Brightens Patient's Stay

Some of the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center sits directly across from the college's fraternity row. On October 30, a 12-year-old cancer patient and her mother put a sign in the window of her hospital room asking for pizza. It was noticed by members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. Over the course of the child's hospital stay, the members of the fraternity brought food, flowers, a guitar, and much more.

The young patient named Lexi not only has cancer but treatment caused her to develop heart problems. While she spent many weeks in the hospital, the fraternity members were frequent visitors and kept her spirits high.

The young men of the fraternity spent hours singing and playing cards with Lexi. They also brought along members of the UCLA soccer, swim-



ming, rowing, and tennis teams, the football team's quarterback, school cheerleaders, and members of sororities and of the Christian Campus Ministry.

SAE chapter president Kevin Autran says, "Brothers stepped up to go visit her essentially every day. Some just stopped by to give her a little gift like a shirt or a teddy bear, and some stayed for hours to hang out with her."

Lexi especially enjoyed her view of the fraternity house decorated for Christmas with her name on the roof in lights of her favorite color, purple. SAE fraternity members from around the country donated to a fund that will help pay her hospital bills.

Lexi's parents have been through a hard time watching their daughter suffer and the students were a bright spot for the family. Her mother says, "I never knew that so many young adults had it in them." (NBC, 11-30-15)

Google Still Spying On Students

Google Chromebooks make up over half of all computers purchased for use in the nation's schools. About 50 million American students, teachers, and administrators use Google Apps for Education, free software that offers email, a calendar, word processing, and more.

Google, along with 200 other companies, signed the Student Privacy Pledge, a binding agreement that is supposed to stop data mining by private companies. But the nonprofit advocacy group Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) has filed a complaint with the FTC accusing Google of data mining and of being in violation of the Student Privacy Pledge.

Google is supposed to refrain from collecting information from students'



school computer browsing history for use in targeting ads. EFF says Google is holding to the agreement on "core" Google Apps for Education services but that Google is gathering and using data when students use peripheral applications like blogging sites, maps, photos, and YouTube.

EFF says Google should abide by its agreement to get permission from students and parents before collecting student browsing data. An EFF attorney says, "All we're saying is that Google promised to ask first and they failed to do so."

EFF filed "the complaint as part of a broader campaign called 'Spying on Students,'" which is an effort to strengthen student privacy laws. (NPR, 12-8-15)

in Newark than they are across the nation. He believes that revised teachers union contracts helped retain good teachers.

But with the massive amount of money invested and the turmoil students, teachers, and parents endured, some positive results could be expected. The question remains, what sort of results could have been achieved if the project had proceeded logically and with important people, like parents and teachers, on board from the beginning.

One attribute of the Zuckerberg effort that is particularly troublesome to the community is that \$20 million of his

What Was Learned?

In a post on his Facebook page, Zuckerberg refutes some of the failures that reportedly occurred in Newark. He claims that graduation rates increased and that charter schools are more successful

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EDUCATION BRIEFS

In October, a parent lunch monitor and the principal at Glendo High School in Platte County, Wyoming told Christian students that they couldn't form a prayer circle and pray before eating a meal in the school cafeteria and instead had to go to a place away from other students if they wanted to bless their food. But their problem was solved by one letter to the school district from Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), lawyers trained to defend religious liberty. Once ADF pointed out the school's error in interpreting the First Amendment and threatened to take legal action, the district superintendent consulted attorneys. In the end, the superintendent responded to ADF, "I think our staff and district have a better understanding of students' rights regarding prayer and how to handle future incidents." Students are now allowed to pray in prayer circles before meals at school. (ADFmedia.org, 12-18-15)

Even as Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act, which increases academic training for preschool children, an important study was released showing that waiting an additional year to start kindergarten is more developmentally appropriate. The Stanford University Center for Education Policy Analysis studied tens of thousands of students and reported: "We find that a one-year delay in the start of school dramatically reduces [73%] inattention/hyperactivity at age 7, a measure of self regulation with strong negative links to student achievement." The study says that the effects of postponing academic focus are still evident at age 11. (cepa.Stanford.edu, 10-2015)

The graduation rate for the nation's class of 2014 reached a record 82%, which is an all-time high and represents an increase of 1 percentage point from the class of 2013's graduation rate, according to data released by the U.S. Dept. of Education. (Education Week, 12-15-15)

President Obama will avoid Senatorial confirmation for John King, the former New York chancellor of schools, by calling him "acting" Secretary of Education, replacing Arne Duncan. (Washington Post, 12-24-15)

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Don't They Study the First Amendment?

While most college students focused on studying or how to pay their tuition, some students at several American colleges have recently staged sit-ins, held protests, and submitted long lists of demands to school administrators. In some cases, it seems that students only wish to hear a repetition of their own politically correct beliefs, shutting down anything resembling open debate.

Students have issued demands that colleges provide a "safe space." For some this means administrators must do more to ensure a welcoming environment for students of color or others they believe to be marginalized on campus. For others it also means they shouldn't have to hear anything with which they disagree or anything that they might find disturbing.

The president of the University of Missouri system and the chancellor both resigned "amid a controversy over race." African-American students were joined by others who complained that school leaders failed to stop racism. Their complaints revolve around incidents of racial insults that allegedly took place on or near campus.

One incident that caused strife at Mizzou was a claim by the president of the Missouri Students Association who said that "white men in a passing pickup truck had hurled a racial epithet at him as he walked across campus in September." (CNN, 11-9-15)

This raises the question of how much control a college administration can or should have over the controversial

— and sometimes inappropriate — statements students or outsiders make. At what point does protecting the students cross the line to infringing upon First Amendment rights?

Colleges Encourage Attitudes

Many colleges have "speech codes" that prohibit certain speech. Some provide "free-speech zones," which are particular areas of campus where one may speak freely, reserving the rest of the campus for only careful, politically correct rhetoric.

Professors are using "trigger warnings" in classrooms that alert students in advance when subject matter might distress them.

Even professors who encouraged reduced freedom of expression based on protections for certain "identities," like race, and sex or gender identity are becoming alarmed at the amount of protection from debate that some students currently demand. Some professors dread giving lectures for fear of being accused of committing microaggressions, which are subtle, unintentional and often unconscious affronts.

Administrators at Yale sent out an email advising students not to choose a Halloween costume that another student might find "offensive." A professor, who along with her husband was head of a student housing unit, sent out a follow-up email suggesting that administrators should treat students as adults and not

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MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Learning "Toys" Hacked

When children today "play" with items that are actually sophisticated computers, unsuspecting parents could be putting their family's security in danger. VTech is a Hong Kong company that offers a variety of high-tech learning-based computer "toys" for children. Recently VTech lost control of the online data for about 6.4 million children and nearly 5 million parents worldwide.

One or more hackers stole information on individual children that includes the child's name, photo, gender, birthdate, and address, along with personally identifiable information about their parents, including their address, password, and security questions. This is particularly troubling because many adults use the identical passwords at many online sites, including those for their banks and credit cards.

Hackers who compromised the privacy of children now know their names, what they look like, and where they live because that information supplied by parents and children to VTech was not securely stored by the company.



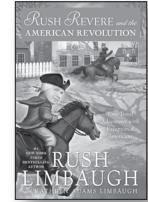
A 21-year-old man was arrested in the United Kingdom for this attack but it isn't known if he worked alone. He claims he stole the information to highlight lax security but this could be an attempt to conceal more nefarious motives. (Forbes, 12-15-15)

VTech claims it modified security settings after the attack but Troy Hunt, a web security specialist who teaches professional courses and speaks worldwide, says, "Despite their assurances that their system is now secure, they still have gaping holes that allow every kid to be matched with every parent." Hunt recommends that all the information be taken offline until VTech properly fixes the glitches that allowed the data theft. He says, "You just can't take chances with other people's data in this way, especially not when they're kids." (Troy-Hunt.com, 11-28-15) Since VTech isn't doing this, parents should consider deleting their children's accounts and putting the gadgets away until the issue is fully resolved.

Book of the Month



Rush Revere and the Star-Spangled Banner: Time-Travel Adventures with Exceptional Americans, Rush Limbaugh, Threshold Editions, 2015, \$19.99



This is the third in a series of what would be history books, except for the time-travel aspect and the sometimes invisible horse, Liberty, which puts them in the category of science fiction. It's encouraging that this patriotic book by Limbaugh and his wife is that category's best-selling children's book on Amazon.

Middle-school teacher "Rush Revere" and several of his students, one student's grandfather, and Liberty take a field trip to Washington, D.C., "the political heart of the country." They visit the Washington Monument, the National Archives, the Capitol, the Supreme Court, and the White House.

At the National Archives they learn that the eagle is the American "symbol of strength and freedom" and they see the Constitution. The grandfather tells the students:

The United States Constitution is our country's most important document. At the time it was written, the words were radical. Yes, it is a physical document but it is a foundation that established an entirely new way of governing. The power under the Constitution remains always with the people.

Readers learn about freedoms that "never existed in human history until our ancestors, the Founders, created them in the Constitution." Limbaugh explains the balance of powers and the three branches of government.

The students travel back to September of 1787 to meet James Madison in Philadelphia. "The father of the Constitution" was helping to determine how the country would move forward after winning the war against England.

They also meet George Mason, "the father of the Bill of Rights," who fought to make sure the first ten Amendments were included "to protect the people's rights" and "to stop the government from taking away the freedoms of our citizens." Rush Revere tells the students, "The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution stops the government from passing laws that prevent you from speaking your mind." (Maybe things would be going more smoothly at a few colleges if students had been exposed to this book.)

In the latter part of the book, the group heads to a Nationals baseball game and then time travels to 1814, to find Francis Scott Key who wrote our National Anthem, inspired by the night the Americans forced the British Navy to flee the Baltimore Harbor. They also help Dolley Madison save a portrait of George Washington as D.C. burns.

Five- through twelve-year-old children would enjoy this book.

FOCUS: Common Core by a New Name and on Steroids: ‘Every Student Succeeds Act’

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by Mary Grabar

A bill over a thousand pages long is drafted behind closed doors and given a nice-sounding name. The chair of the Senate committee, Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, announces on November 18 that the conference report, which is finished, will not be available for reading until November 30. The House vote will be two, at most three, days later.

The vote takes place two days later, on December 2. The 247 House Republicans are divided, but most (all but 64) side with 100% of the 188 Democrats who vote for it.

On December 8, the Senate votes to advance the bill and it is passed the following day. Again, zero opposition from Democrats. Only 12 of the 54 Senate Republicans oppose the measure.

This is the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) that reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), an arm of the War on Poverty that sends federal funds to low-income area schools.

ESSA is supported by Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, Barack Obama, and 37 liberal and far-left civil rights and education groups. It is supported by “the owners of the Common Core Standards” (National Governors Association and the Council of Chief School Officers), as Donna Garner notes. Republican Lamar Alexander, a Common Core booster, joins with Democrat Patty Murray, expressing hope for more such “bipartisan” legislation.

The over 200 grassroots groups and experts who sent a detailed, open letter on October 13 to Congress opposing the Act valiantly continued the battle in the two days between the release of the conference report and the vote in the House. Volunteers divvy up the bill in an attempt to digest it in 48 hours. They continued to rally the troops after it went before the Senate, to no effect. It passed on December 9. The next morning Obama signed it. According to one activist, the hurry was manufactured to prod members to “vote blindly.” ESSA had been on “ice” for six months.

The American Principles Project announces their “disappointment” over passage. Emmet McGroarty chastises Republicans for failing to listen to “the more than 200 pro-Constitution, anti-Common Core grassroots groups that laid out in detail their objections . . . and practically begged their ‘conservative’ elected officials to pay attention.”

Dr. Karen Effrem, president of Education Liberty Watch, calls ESSA “a huge lump of educational coal.” Effrem, a pediatrician, sees in ESSA a solidification of the harmful age-inappropriate methods of Common Core. She thanks presiden-

tial candidates Ted Cruz and Rand Paul for their “steadfast opposition.”

Left-wing sites claim, “Christmas miracle sees end of Common Core.”

The Department of Education had prepared the groundwork for the hurried holiday-time vote with Obama’s own announcement in October, when he inveighed against “excessive testing”—as opt-outs spread like wildfire. He subtly blamed the unpopular test-

ing on [George W. Bush’s] No Child Left Behind. New tests, we are told, will be “state driven and based on multiple measures.” Multiple measures include “non-cognitive skills,” attitudes and emotions.

The Department of Education announces: “The bipartisan bill to fix No Child Left Behind . . . incorporates many of the priorities the Obama administration put forward.”

It does. These are the same priorities undergirding Common Core. According to Jane Robbins, Senior Fellow at the American Principles Project, the rub is in the mandates, as she explained to

Dr. Susan Berry at Breitbart. States must coordinate with eleven different federal statutes and submit their plans for approval by the feds.

Statutes include “the Soviet-style Workforce Innovation and Opportunity

Act that’s designed to connect the K-12 education system to government-controlled workforce-development, the Head Start Act that centralizes pre-school standards, the Education Sci-

ences Reform Act (which seeks to boost data-collection on students). . . .” Standards must focus on “minimal workforce-development rather than academic knowledge”—just like Common Core! States will comply or lose their federal money.

The federal government will determine “college- and career-readiness,” thus continuing its power grab on campuses.

At the other end of the “cradle to career” spectrum is “mission creep” into preschool, as states participate in Race-to-the-Top-like competitive grants. The

Act expands ESEA power by making Head Start preschool a statute (instead of an appropriation), Dr. Susan Berry reports.

Promoters ignored the research that shows the ineffectiveness of Head Start. They ignored studies that indicate that pre-school programs often have a negative impact on students’ ability to concentrate in school.

Additional concerns listed at the Truth in American Education blog include the weakening of parental rights to opt children out of tests, removing checks on federal control, increasing overall federal spending through ESEA, and transferring federal dollars from the classroom to for-profit companies.

As consumers face skyrocketing health insurance premiums they realize that the “Affordable Care Act” is not what its name implies. Similarly, many supporters of the Every Student Succeeds Act will learn that rather than eliminating Common Core, ESSA implements Common Core on steroids.

Mary Grabar, Ph.D., taught college English for 20 years and is now a resident fellow at the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization. She is the founder of the Dissident Prof Education Project, an education reform initiative that offers information and resources for students, parents, and citizens.



Senators Lamar Alexander and Patty Murray applaud President Obama after signing the Every Student Succeeds Act.

U.S. Department of Education Data System Riddled With Vulnerabilities For Students

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by Emmett McGroarty and Jane Robbins

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) has been pushing, bribing, and otherwise “incentivizing” states to expand their student data systems to track students from preschool through the workforce. Using this data, USED claims, can transform education to ensure that each child develops into the type of worker and global citizen the government wants him to be.

This worldview presents fundamental philosophical problems, especially in the American system that was built on individual liberty and limited government. This goes to the issue of privacy—does the government have the right to compile this information, even for well-intentioned purposes? But the other, more pedestrian concern is simple data security—is the information the government has been kept safe?

The short answer is no.

At an extraordinary hearing of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held on November 17, Inspector General Kathleen Tighe testified that USED’s so-called “data

security” system is riddled with vulnerabilities. The problems encompass both lax controls over the people allowed access to sensitive data, as well as outdated technology and inadequate security to prevent unauthorized access.

USED’s system contains over 139 million Social Security numbers (largely through its office of Financial Student Aid), along with sensitive borrower information about students and families contained in the National Student Loan Database. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that of the 97,000 account/users with access to this information (government employees and contractors), fewer than 20% have undergone a background check to receive a security clearance. Parents should be horrified at this casual approach to allowing data access.

But even if USED were scrupulous about limiting authorized access, both OIG and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the security mechanisms protecting that data are abysmal. Tighe’s indictment was devastating: “During our testing of the EDUCATE environment, OIG testers were able to gain full access to the De-

partment’s network and our access went undetected by Dell [the vendor] and the Department’s Office of the Chief Information Officer.” Moreover, as the Committee reported, USED “is not heeding repeat warnings from the Inspector General (IG) that their information systems are vulnerable to security threats.”

Let that percolate for a moment.

A federal department that’s using its massive power to increase collection and sharing of sensitive student information—and that wants its hands on as much of this data as possible—has demonstrated its utter inability to protect that data. In fact, it has demonstrated not only incompetence, but actual unconcern about the problem.

Dr. Danny Harris, USED’s Chief Information Officer, defended his department by downplaying the vulnerabilities. Harris led Rep. Will Hurd (R-TX) through a meandering explanation of the bureaucratic maze that he seemed to suggest prevents him from actually protecting student data. He also rationalized the four years it took to detect unauthorized devices on the USED network by claiming the department didn’t have the “talent” to act more quickly (actually, that damning statement

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Illinois District Transgender Settlement

A settlement agreement between Illinois Township High School District 211 and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights about the district's transgender student was so distorted by government representatives that the district almost backed out.

Although many residents of Illinois Township High School District 211 believe no student with male anatomy should be granted any access to the female locker room, the local board of education voted 5 to 2 to approve an agreement made with the U.S. Education Department (USED) Office of Civil Rights that settles the transgender case covered in the December 2015 *Education Reporter*.

Under the terms of the agreement reached in December, the school district will continue the existing policy of using screens to separate the male transgender student from females in the locker room. The agreement only applies to the one student who sued the district with the help of the ACLU.

But headlines in several media articles announced: "Transgender Gains Full Locker Room Access."

The media's misstatement of facts occurred because the Department of Education claimed the school had capitulated to the USED Office of Civil Rights (OCR), that the student would have full locker room access, and that the agreement would apply to any other transgender student in the district. Some believe the OCR misrepresentation was a purposeful effort to scare other school districts into believing they can't win against the government.

The Illinois school district was so distressed by the misinformation spread by the Dept. of Education that they threatened to retract the agreement. The Board of Education issued this statement: "We are disappointed that the OCR made an already very difficult, passionate, and emotional issue very confusing with their apparent misstatements and lack of clarity in describing the agreement."

"The OCR appears to be stating to the media what they wish was in the agreement, rather than what was actually agreed upon by both OCR and the District 211 board of education," according to school Superintendent Dan Cates. Cates said the USED OCR "acted in bad faith" and that the district would back out of the agreement "unless the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights stops characterizing it as



giving the student unrestricted access."

According to Superintendent Cates, "From the outset, our public statements have consistently conveyed the District's position that unrestricted access by transgender students in our open locker rooms is unacceptable because gender is not the same as anatomy." Cates clarified that "if this student doesn't comply, access will no longer be allowed." He continued, "The agreement also removes the threat of the loss of federal funds and states that no violation of Title IX or discrimination by the district has occurred."

The Board of Education also maintains that "the agreement explicitly recognizes that the District does not admit any violation of federal law or regulation." This is an important point that may be used as a precedent when other districts attempt to fight claims of Title IX violation.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) seems to understand the settlement made concerning their client, as evidenced by their response. "The ACLU believes the school district's insistence that the student not be allowed full unrestricted access to locker rooms is still a violation of the law." An ACLU lawyer claims that the district "continues to demonstrate a wanton ignorance of the science of gender by persisting in drawing a false distinction between transgender persons' gender and anatomy. Let me be clear. My client is a girl — full stop."

At a public meeting about the settlement, speakers were allotted time according to a lottery. Several of those who spoke in favor of the transgender getting full locker room access were from outside the area. Many local students and parents are dissatisfied with the settlement and feel there should be no accommodation of transgender students. The founder of District 211 Parents for Privacy says, "This proves that some things that are this important should be put before the public as a direct vote because it's clear this board didn't listen to the majority of the community."

This issue will doubtless be a continuing cause of dissension, controversy, and confusion in other schools across the nation. One side believes all students deserve privacy and the other side believes biological males should have full access to female locker rooms, bathrooms, and showers because they believe themselves to be girls. (*Washington Post*, 12-3-15) (*Daily Herald*, 12-6-15 and 12-8-15) (*Education Week*, 12-9-15)

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donation went to outside consultants who took care of management of various parts of the project. (BusinessInsider.com, 9-25-15)

Zuckerberg may have learned something from the Newark mistakes. His next venture into education will be closer to his home in the San Francisco Bay area, where he promises to "work with everyone — district schools, charters, private schools, teachers, parents, unions, and other philanthropists."

It's not clear why tech billionaires feel they have anything to offer education reform, but some combination of elitist ego and naiveté might drive them to believe in their own potential. Bill Gates is the largest private funder of Common

Core. Steve Jobs' widow is venturing into education reform. Many find their money useful but their interference infuriating.

Like Zuckerberg, the other main players who disrupted Newark education have moved on. Former Newark mayor Booker is now the junior U.S. Senator for New Jersey. Governor Christie works on his presidential campaign. Left in Newark to deal with the ongoing challenges of inner city education are the hardworking teachers, the struggling students, and the parents who were left out of the decision-making loop. It is up to them to continue the arduous task of lifting up the children.

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d dictate their costume choices. Some students were angered by her email.

The professor wrote, "I don't wish to trivialize genuine concerns about cultural and personal representation, and other challenges to our lived experience in a plural community." She continued, "Even if we could agree on how to avoid offense — and I'll note that no one around campus seems overly concerned about the offense taken by religiously conservative folks to skin-revealing costumes — I wonder, and I am not trying to be provocative: Is there no room anymore for a child or young person to be a little bit obnoxious . . . a little bit inappropriate or provocative or, yes, offensive?"

"Her message was a model of relevant, thoughtful, civil engagement," according to *The Atlantic* magazine. (11-9-15) But some students were offended by the email, and an enraged group of them verbally abused her husband on campus, while demanding their resignation.

In the end, she and her husband resigned their dorm position, he will take a sabbatical from teaching, and she quit.

Free Speech Matters

A Pew Research Center survey released in November of 2015 may partially explain what some students seek. A question on the Pew "Global Attitudes Survey" asked if "the government should be able to prevent people from saying offensive statements about minority groups." Among American millennials, those aged 18-34, 40% want government to control such speech.

While the majority of this youngest age group still seems to understand the principle of free speech, generational differences are striking. Among Gen Xers, ages 35-50, and Boomers, ages 51-69, only 27% and 24%, respectively, agree with speech censorship.

Pew calls those aged 70-87 "Silent."

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is fairly easy to believe).

And under questioning from Rep. Jody Hice (R-GA) about the security risks created by USED's horribly outdated technology, Harris claimed to be "working hard" to fix the problem. But not to worry, he said — the system is "reasonably secure" as it is.

The Committee posted other key takeaways from the testimony that ought to trouble every American:

- [USED] scored a NEGATIVE 14% on the [Office of Management and Budget] Cybersprint [security program] for total users using strong authentication;
- [USED] received an "F" on the [Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act] scorecard;
- [USED] maintains 184 information systems;
- Twenty-nine [of these systems] are valued by the Office of Management and Budget as "high asset"; and
- [USED] needs significant improvement in four key security areas: continuous monitoring, configuration management, incident response and reporting, and remote access management.

This group was most supportive of free speech, with only 12% supporting restrictions. (PewResearch.org, 11-20-15)

It is clear that curtailment of free speech is gaining traction among younger people. Some wonder whether components of the modern education system are causing generational changes and individuals' failure to understand the First Amendment. Maybe students aren't studying the Constitution. Possibly the laser-like focus on multiculturalism and resulting effort to avoid hurting anyone's feelings is skewing their critical thinking skills.

All that tolerance that educators have worked to instill in their students sometimes ends up looking quite intolerant.

The question of whether people "should be able to publicly say these things" hinges on who determines what "these things" are. Who would students choose as the free-speech police who would determine what is acceptable and what is not? Who will monitor when regulation crosses the line so that citizens are no longer allowed any opinions or beliefs about what is right or wrong?

It is hoped that once the younger generation has more time to reflect, more of them will see the dangers of handing over such duties to anyone, including the government.

After various campus incidents, some students will learn lessons about free speech, the Constitution, how to control one's emotions, and how to react reasonably even in tense situations. Other students may fail to learn such important, positive lessons and will instead continue to be coddled and will come away from academic pursuits with a limited outlook, a flawed mindset, and other undesirable traits that could render them unemployable and unable to survive in the real world.

Chairman Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) summed up the problem: "[A]lmost half of the population of the United States of America has their personal information sitting in this database, which is not secure."

It's bad enough that USED is failing miserably at protecting the sensitive information of American students and their families. It's even worse that the federal educrats are twisting arms in the state bureaucracies to ramp up data-collection efforts on students. If the feds can't or won't protect this data, are parents to believe that states — rushing to build out data systems to qualify for or spend federal money — will do a better job?

At the very least, every state should initiate an independent security audit of its own student data system. Parents have the right to know the truth about government-created risks to their children.

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Editor's note: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) solidifies and increases collection and storage of personally identifiable student data.