



The Phyllis Schlafly Report



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Backlash Against Common Core

Common Core (CC) is the issue that is bringing out hundreds of citizens who never before attended political meetings. Common Core is the attempt of Barack Obama's Department of Education to force all states and schools to adopt national education standards for each grade level that will dictate what all kids learn and don't learn.

Common Core means federal control of school curriculum, *i.e.*, control by Obama Administration leftwing bureaucrats. They plan on having the power to dictate and overrule all decisions by state and local school boards, state legislatures, parents, and even Congress.

It's not only public schools that must obey the fed's dictates. Common Core will control the curriculum of charter schools, private schools, religious schools, Catholic schools, and homeschooling. The control mechanism is the tests (called assessments). Kids must pass the tests in order to get a high school diploma or admittance to college. If they haven't studied a curriculum based on Common Core standards, they won't score well on the tests.

Common Core cannot be described as voluntary. Since CC is so costly to the states (estimated \$15 billion for retraining teachers and purchase of computers for all kids to take the tests), CC is foisted on the locals by a combination of bribes, federal handouts, and as the price for getting a waiver to exempt a state from other obnoxious mandates such as No Child Left Behind.

Don't be under any illusion that Common Core will make kids smarter. The Common Core academic level is lower than what many states use now, and the math standards are so inferior that the only real mathematician on the validation committee refused to sign off on the math standards. He said the CC standards are two years behind international expectations by the 8th grade, and fall further behind in grades 8 to 12. The CC math standards downgrade the years when algebra and geometry are to be taught.

CC advocates claim that the new standards will make students college ready. That depends on how you define college; students will be ready only to enter a two-year nonselective community college.

Common Core authorizes government agencies to gather and store all sorts of private information on every schoolchild into a longitudinal database from birth through all levels of schooling, and gives government the right to share and exchange this nosy information with other government and private agencies. This is a violation of federal law and is the type of surveillance and control of individuals that is the mark of a totalitarian government.

Common Core reminds us of how Communist China gathered nosy information on all its schoolchildren, stored it in manila folders called "dangans," and then turned the file over to the kid's employer when he left school. The *New York Times* once published a picture of a giant Chinese warehouse containing hundreds of thousands of these folders. That was in the pre-internet era when information was stored on paper. Now data collection and storage are efficiently managed on computers.

Common Core is encrusted with lies. It is not, as advertised, "state" written; it is a national project created in secret without any input from teachers or state legislatures. It is not "internationally benchmarked"; that never happened.

The CC English standards designate that the assigned readings should be 50% "informational" texts instead of great American and English literature and classics. The result is that CC readings can be very political. The appendix suggests "informational" readings such as a sales talk for government health care and propaganda for global warming (including a push for Agenda 21). Some of the fiction suggested is worthless and even pornographic. CC advocates protest that the standards include some American "classics" such as *The Grapes of Wrath*. Citing that leftwing novel as an example of great literature shows how pathetic the English standards are.

CC advocates admit the standards cannot be changed or errors corrected because they are already printed and copyrighted. We should take a bit of advice from our neighbor to the north. Canada has no national standards (all standards are adopted locally) and does not even have any national Department of Education.



Common Core Will Not Make Kids Smarter

The overall Common Core strategy is to raise the students in the middle a point or two but do nothing to motivate or help the smarter kids or the dumber kids. CC's goal is to achieve a result like Lake Wobegon, the fictional Minnesota town where "all kids are above average."

Professor Sandra Stotsky explains this in academic language:

The mathematics coursework taken by our low-achieving high school students may indeed become stronger. But if such an alignment is not strategically altered, states may be unwittingly reducing other students' participation in more demanding mathematics curricula and their academic eligibility for undergraduate STEM majors and internationally competitive jobs in mathematics-dependent areas.

Common Core has carefully disguised its road to equally low outcomes for all demographic groups, and many state boards of education may quickly follow up their unexamined adoption of Common Core's K-12 standards . . . by lowering their high school graduation requirements in the name of alignment, thinking that, once again, they have strengthened their public schools. . . . When Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, and Vermont (high achieving states in grade 8 mathematics on the 2011 NAEP) end up in the "not aligned" category, one begins to wonder what matching might mean.

CC advocates continue to repeat that CC standards are not a curriculum but are merely standards. However, it's clear that the curriculum will have to be aligned with the CC tests. Teachers will be compelled to "teach to the test," and the curriculum must be in harmony with the standards and the tests.

The UCLA-based National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing Common Core report (January 2013) concluded that "educators will align curriculum and teaching to what is tested, and what is not assessed largely will be ignored." Bill Gates, the largest individual financial contributor to Common Core, clarified the connection in a speech to the National Conference of State Legislators in July 2009: "We'll know we've succeeded when the curriculum and the tests are aligned to these standards."

The Fordham Institute studied the science standards and concluded that they are inferior to existing standards in 12 states, superior to only 16 states, and the standards of 22 states are too close to call. It would have been better if more states simply adopted the better standards already successfully piloted in 12 states.

Common Core English Standards

Professor Sandra Stotsky, who developed Massachusetts' highly regarded K-12 standards, said that the CC English standards "weaken the basis of literary and cultural knowledge needed for authentic college coursework." She was a member of the Common Core validation Committee, but refused to approve the standards.

In a report released by the Pioneer Institute, Professor Stotsky gave an example of what Common Core advocates mean when they say "informational" texts will promote analytical thinking by students. She cited her grandson's experience in a public school. The students were assigned to read selections on the fate of the Taino Indians and from a diary supposedly written by Christopher Columbus's cabin boy. Then the students were told to write to a state official opining on whether Columbus should continue to be honored by a state holiday. Every student's letter said Columbus should not be so honored. That's the sort of assignment that CC educators think will increase students' analytical thinking? And that's how CC spreads its liberal propaganda.

Comic books and graphic novels used to be considered useful primarily for underachieving students and poor readers as a means to get them interested in books. But now Common Core is bringing picture books into the mainstream of education. The president of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English pointed out that graphic novels are specifically approved in Common Core standards, so they will surely have a larger role in classrooms.

At a National Teachers of English conference, the teachers of a senior Advanced Placement honors course presented an argument against having students read *Beowulf* and for substituting a comic book based on *Beowulf*. No doubt when parents complain about the omission of classic literature, Common Core advocates will cite this assignment of *Beowulf*.

Common Core Math Standards

Stanford Professor James Milgram, the only mathematician on the Common Core Validation Committee, concluded that the math standards don't "even fully cover" the material in a solid geometry or second-year algebra course. After reviewing the Common Core standards, Milgram told the Texas state legislature that the CC standards are "in large measure a political document that . . . is written at a very low level and does not adequately reflect our current understanding of why the math programs in the high-achieving countries give dramatically better results." He refused to sign off on the math standards.

Science Standards Rate a "C"

The new science standards are called "Next Generation Science Standards." They were examined by nine scientists and mathematicians for content, rigor and clarity, after which the Thomas B. Fordham Institute gave them a grade of "C." The criticisms advanced by these experts referred to the "ceiling on the content and skills that will be measured at each grade," the excluding of content that more advanced students can learn, the failure "to include essential math content that is critical to science learning" in physics and chemistry, and the "confusing" wording of the standards.

Another problem found by Fordham reviewers is the focus on students "performing" rather than learning a base of knowledge and the storehouse of information that students must acquire in order to engage in scientific reasoning.

Proponents of evolution and manmade climate change are ecstatic about the new Common Core science standards. *Education Week* reports: "The standards make clear that evolution is fundamental to understanding the life sciences."

It is misleading to claim that CC standards will make students "college-ready." They will not be ready to major in STEM subjects at a four-year university.

Indiana Leads the Way

The battle against Common Core began with two mothers, Heather Crossin and Erin Tuttle, who became alarmed when their sixth grade children brought home their math textbooks. Like good parents, they inspected the books and immediately realized they were inferior to Indiana's former textbooks and were based on Common Core standards. They alerted other parents, their state Senators, Eagle Forum, and Tea Party groups.

Common Core became a big issue in the 2012 elections. The State Superintendent of Schools, Tony Bennett, a Republican elected in a very Republican state, was a big supporter of Common Core. Bennett's reelection was expected to be easy. The grassroots supported an anti-CC Democrat against him, made Common Core the big issue, and defeated Bennett, even though the Democrat, Glenda Ritz, was outspent 5 to 1.

Then Senator Scott Schneider sponsored an anti-Common Core bill, the Indiana State Legislature passed it, and it was signed into law by Governor Mike Pence.

Senator Grassley Supports Parents

Always a friend of parents' rights, Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) is leading an effort to ask Senate appropriators to restore state-level decision-making about academic content in public schools in order to counter the way federal

incentives have interfered to force states to adopt the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Grassley said the Common Core program was initially billed as a voluntary effort, and that current federal law makes clear that the U.S. Department of Education may not be involved in setting specific content standards or determining the content of state assessments. Grassley explained:

The reality is that the U.S. Department of Education has made adoption of standards matching those in Common Core a requirement for getting waivers and funds. This violates the structure of our education system, where academic content decisions are made at the state level giving parents a direct line of accountability to those making the decisions. The federal government should not be allowed to coerce state education decision makers. . . .

We ask that the Fiscal Year 2014 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Bill include language to restore state decision-making and accountability with respect to state academic content standards. The decision about what students should be taught and when it should be taught has enormous consequences for our children. Therefore, parents ought to have a straight line of accountability to those who are making such decisions. State legislatures, which are directly accountable to the citizens of their states, are the appropriate place for those decisions to be made, free from any pressure from the U.S. Department of Education.

While the Common Core State Standards Initiative was initially billed as a voluntary effort between states, federal incentives have clouded the picture. Current federal law makes clear that the U.S. Department of Education may not be involved in setting specific content standards or determining the content of state assessments. Nevertheless, the selection criteria designed by the U.S. Department of Education for the Race to the Top Program provided that for a state to have any chance to compete for funding, it must commit to adopting a "common set of K-12 standards" matching the description of the Common Core. The U.S. Department of Education also made adoption of "college- and career-ready standards" meeting the description of the Common Core a condition to receive a state waiver under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Senator Grassley asked other Senators to join him in making sure that federal funds are not used by the Secretary of Education —

(1) to directly develop, implement or evaluate multi-

State or other specified standards (defined in this section as any set of academic content standards common to multiple States, including the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, or any other specified set or type of academic content standards selected by the Secretary) or assessments aligned with such standards;

(2) to award any grant, contract, or cooperative agreement that requires or specifically authorizes the development, implementation, or evaluation of multi-State or other specified standards, or assessments aligned with such standards.

There may be other goals behind Common Core. The outgoing president of the Missouri branch of the National Education Association (NEA) gave an exit interview about her eagerness to implement Common Core. She said CC would “prepare our kids for a global community, a global society. These are going to exactly take us there.”

Resolution Passed by the Republican National Committee

Whereas, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a set of academic standards promoted and supported by two private membership organizations, the National Governor’s Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) as a method for conforming American students to uniform (“one size fits all”) achievement goals to make them more competitive in a global marketplace; and

Whereas, the NGA and the CCSSO received tens of millions of dollars from private third parties to advocate for and develop the CCSS strategy, subsequently created the CCSS through a process that was not subject to any freedom of information acts or other sunshine laws, and never piloted; and

Whereas, even though Federal Law prohibits the federalizing of curriculum, the Obama Administration accepted the CCSS plan and used 2009 Stimulus Bill money to reward the states that were most committed to the president’s CCSS agenda; but they failed to give states, their legislatures and their citizens time to evaluate the CCSS before having to commit to them; and

Whereas, the NGA and CCSSO in concert with the same corporations developing the CCSS ‘assessments’ have

created new textbooks, digital media and other teaching materials aligned to the standards which must be purchased and adopted by local school districts in order that students may effectively compete on CCSS ‘assessments’; and

Whereas, the CCSS program includes federally funded testing and the collection and sharing of massive amounts of personal student and teacher data; and

Whereas, the CCSS effectively removes educational choice and competition since all schools and all districts must use Common Core ‘assessments’ based on the Common Core standards to allow all students to advance in the school system and to advance to higher education pursuits; Therefore be it

Resolved, the Republican National Committee as stated in the 2012 Republican Party Platform, “do not believe in a one-size-fits all approach to education and support

broad education choices to parents and children at the State and local level,” which is best based on a free market approach to education for students to achieve individual excellence; and be it further

Resolved, the Republican National Committee recognizes the CCSS for what it is — an inappropriate overreach to standardize and control the education of our children so they will conform to a preconceived “normal”; and be it further

Resolved, that the Republican National Committee rejects the collection of personal student data for any non-educational purpose without the prior written consent of an adult student or a child student’s parent and that it rejects the sharing of such personal data without the prior written consent of an adult student or a child student’s parent, with any person or entity other than schools or education agencies within the state; and be it finally

Resolved, the 2012 Republican Party Platform specifically states the need to repeal the numerous federal regulations which interfere with State and local control of public schools; and therefore, the Republican National Committee rejects this CCSS plan which creates and fits the country with a nationwide straitjacket on academic freedom and achievement.



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