



# The Phyllis Schlafly Report



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## Common Core's Growing Unpopularity

The highly acclaimed school standards called Common Core are becoming so unpopular that they may soon be politically untouchable. The critics are piling on from Glenn Beck to the *Wall Street Journal*, with senior academics and activist parents in between.

The latest is a detailed criticism of the mathematics standards by a prize-winning math professor at the University of California at Berkeley, Marina Ratner. It is refreshing that her criticisms are very specific and include examples of assignments that parents can see are ridiculous.

Professor Ratner was alerted to the stupidity of Common Core by looking at the homework assigned to her grandson in 6th grade Berkeley middle school. Fractions are taught by having the kids draw pictures of everything such as 6 divided by 8, and 4 divided by  $\frac{2}{7}$ , and also by creating fictional stories for such things as  $\frac{2}{3}$  divided by  $\frac{3}{4}$ . A student who gives the correct answer right away and doesn't draw a picture or make up a story loses points.

Ms. Ratner concluded that Common Core is making simple math concepts "artificially intricate and complex with the pretense of being deeper, while the actual content taught was primitive." The bottom line is that Common Core is inferior to the current good California standards, and the \$15.8 billion spent nationally to develop and adopt Common Core was a gigantic waste.

College ready? That's another deceit. Math experts are saying that Common Core standards are not preparing students for colleges to which most parents aspire to send their children.

The Common Core History Standards have just become available. Real scholars say they are a "stealthy" plan to teach kids a leftwing curriculum.

Scholar Stanley Kurtz says that the new plan for teaching American History is spelled out in the SAT college entrance and Advanced Placement exams. They pitch out "traditional emphasis on America's founders and the principles of constitutional government" in favor of a leftist "emphasis on race, gender, class, ethnicity."

According to Kurtz, "James Madison, Thomas Jeffer-

son, and the other founders are largely left out of the new test unless they are "presented as examples of conflict and identity by class, gender, race, ethnicity, etc." The text of the new AP U.S. History exam has been closely guarded, revealed only to a few certified AP U.S. History teachers who are sworn to secrecy.

Parents who are attentive to their children's studies and homework have been up in arms against Common Core for many months. Now Common Core has become such a big issue that it's beginning to bring the politicians into line with what the public is demanding.

Indiana was the first state to show the political power of the anti-Common Core movement. The activist moms defeated a superintendent of education and several legislators on this issue. The South Carolina Legislature voted to stop the use of Common Core.

Oklahoma made the biggest splash when the state legislature voted to repeal the state's earlier endorsement of Common Core. The governor signed the repeal, but the unelected state board of education impudently filed suit to nullify the repeal, and then the Oklahoma state supreme court wisely upheld the elected legislature's repeal.

The state of Texas, under Governor Rick Perry, was smart enough to be one of the five states that never signed on to Common Core in the first place. But now the pressure is on to force Texas to use the new AP U.S. History Exam anyway, and Texans claim that is illegal under state law.

Louisiana was one of the original 45 states that endorsed Common Core before the standards were even written. But one day Governor Bobby Jindal actually read his son's Common Core math homework, was shocked, and then issued an executive order to block its implementation in Louisiana.

Two more Governors have seen the light and turned against Common Core. Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker announced that he wants the state legislature to repeal the standards when it reconvenes in January, and Governor Gary Herbert of Utah ordered his attorney general to conduct a review of the controversial standards.

## Excerpts from Various Critiques of Common Core

STANLEY KURTZ, *New War Over High School U.S. History*, *National Review Online*, July 10, 2014

Americans are only just now waking up to a quiet but devastatingly effective effort to replace the teaching of traditional American history in our high schools with a new, centrally controlled, and sharply left-leaning curriculum.

The College Board, the company that issues the SAT and the various Advanced Placement (AP) exams, has created an elaborate new framework for the AP U.S. History Exam that will effectively force nearly all American high schools, public and private, to transform the way they teach U.S. History.

The traditional emphasis on America's founders and the principles of constitutional government will soon be jettisoned in favor of a left-leaning emphasis on race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.

James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and the other founders are largely left out of the new test, unless they are presented as examples of conflict and identity by class, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. The Constitution can be studied as an example of the Colonists' belief in the superiority of their own culture, for instance. But any teacher who presents a full unit on the principles of the American Constitution taught in the traditional way would be severely disadvantaging his students.

Just as the Common Core became an established fact before most American parents, lawmakers, and school districts even knew it existed, the new AP U.S. History Exam is about to entrench a controversial and highly politicized national school curriculum without proper notice or debate. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and a full understanding of our founding principles are on the way out. Race, gender, class, and ethnicity are coming in, all in secrecy and in clear violation of the Constitution's guarantee that education remain in control of the states.

The time to oppose the new AP U.S. History Exam is now.

PROFESSOR MARINA RATNER, *Making Math Education Even Worse*, *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 5, 2014

I first encountered the Common Core State Standards last fall, when my grandson started sixth grade in a public middle school here in Berkeley, Calif.

I found hardly any academic mathematicians who could say the standards were higher than the old California standards, which were among the nation's best.

Jason Zimba, another lead writer of the mathematics standards, told the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that the new standards wouldn't prepare students for colleges to which "most parents aspire" to send their children.

It became clear that the new standards represent lower expectations and that students taught in the way that these standards require would have little chance of being admitted

to even an average college and would certainly struggle if they did get in.

The teacher required that students draw pictures of everything: of 6 divided by 8, of 4 divided by  $\frac{2}{7}$ , of  $0.8 \times 0.4$ , and so forth. "For example, create a story context for  $\frac{2}{3}$  divided by  $\frac{3}{4}$  and use a visual fraction model to show the quotient . . ."

Who would draw a picture to divide  $\frac{2}{3}$  by  $\frac{3}{4}$ ?

A student who gives the correct answer right away (as one should) and doesn't draw anything loses points.

Here are some more examples of the Common Core's convoluted and meaningless manipulations of simple concepts: "draw a series of tape diagrams to represent  $(12 \text{ divided by } 3) \times 3 = 12$ , or: rewrite  $(30 \text{ divided by } 5) = 6$  as a subtraction expression."

This model-drawing mania went on in my grandson's class for the entire year, leaving no time to cover geometry and other important topics.

Simple concepts are made artificially intricate and complex with the pretense of being deeper — while the actual content taught was primitive.

The Common Core standards will move the U.S. even closer to the bottom in international ranking.

PETER WOOD, *What the Common Core Will Do to Colleges*, *Manhattan Institute*, March 16, 2014

**Goodbye Local Control.** The Common Core transfers a lot of power over the nation's schools from local districts and state governments to the federal government. The transfer is deceptive and probably illegal. The deception comes from the Common Core being sold as "voluntarily" adopted by the states. The illegality comes from statutory law that prohibits the federal government's involvement in creating school curricula.

**Big Brother.** The Common Core is designed to collect and aggregate an immense amount of data on individual students' academic performance. Critics worry that this will eventuate in detailed federal files on everyone who attends school.

JANE ROBBINS AND LARRY KRIEGER, *The College Board's Attack on American History*, *Breitbart*, May 28, 2014

Imagine having your teenager emerge from a U.S. history course with only a vague recognition of the name "George Washington." Suppose that course mentioned the father of our country with reference to only one speech — no discussion of his military leadership and triumphs, his personal sacrifice to accept the call to become the first President, or his wise and steady leadership during the tumultuous first years of our nation.

To put this into perspective, imagine how South Africans would respond if an unelected agency issued a history of their country that contained just one reference to Nelson Mandela.

Beginning in August, such a course will be offered to 500,000 of America's most talented high-school sophomores and juniors — the College Board's new AP U.S. History Framework. The new College Board Framework will replace the traditional 5-page topical outline with a 98-page document that dictates how teachers should cover the required topics. George Washington gets one brief mention; other founders, such as Benjamin Franklin and James Madison, none. The Declaration of Independence is referred to in passing in one clause of one sentence.

If the Framework virtually ignores the most important men and documents in American history, what does it find worthy of attention? The answer is, pretty much anything that casts a negative light on our country. The redesigned Framework inculcates a consistently negative view of American history by highlighting oppressors and exploiters while ignoring the dreamers and innovators who built our country.

The College Board's own website confirms that the AP exam will focus exclusively on content specified in the Framework. In short, what isn't tested won't be taught.

The redesigned Framework is thoroughly biased, poorly written, ineptly outlined, and consistently negative in tone. These egregious flaws must be corrected.

**JANE ROBBINS, *Framework Distorts America's History*, Heartland, March 26, 2014**

A particularly troubling failure of the Framework is its dismissal of the Declaration of Independence and the principles so eloquently expressed there. The Framework's entire discussion of this seminal document consists of just one phrase in one sentence: "The colonists' belief in the superiority of republican self-government based on the natural rights of the people found its clearest American expression in Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and in the Declaration of Independence." The Framework thus ignores the philosophical underpinnings of the Declaration and the willingness of the signers to pledge "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor" to the cause of freedom.

**Ignoring Cultural Giants:** The Framework also sidesteps any discussion of the personalities and achievements of American giants whose courage and conviction helped build United States. It excises Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and the other founders from the nation's story. George Washington's historical contributions are reduced to a brief sentence fragment noting his Farewell Address. Two pages later, the Framework grants teachers the flexibility to discuss the architecture of Spanish missions, suggesting it merits more attention than the heroes of 1776.

**LYNDESE LAYTON, *How Bill Gates pulled off Common Core revolution*, Washington Post, June 8, 2014**

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation didn't just bankroll the development of what became known as the Common Core State Standards. With more than \$200 million, the foundation also built political support across the country, persuad-

ing state governments to make systemic and costly changes.

Bill Gates was de facto organizer, providing the money and structure for states to work together on common standards in a way that avoided the usual collision between states' rights and national interests that had undercut every previous effort, dating from the Eisenhower administration.

The Gates Foundation spread money across the political spectrum, to entities including the big teachers unions, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, and business organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce — groups that have clashed in the past but became vocal backers of the standards.

Money flowed to policy groups on the right and left, funding research by scholars of varying political persuasions who promoted the idea of common standards. Liberals at the Center for American Progress and conservatives affiliated with the American Legislative Exchange Council who routinely disagree on nearly every issue accepted Gates money and found common ground on the Common Core.

The standards have become so pervasive that they also quickly spread through private Catholic schools. About 100 of 176 Catholic dioceses have adopted the standards because it is increasingly difficult to buy classroom materials and send teachers to professional development programs that are not influenced by the Common Core, Catholic educators said.

And yet, because of the way education policy is generally decided, the Common Core was instituted in many states without a single vote taken by an elected lawmaker. Kentucky even adopted the standards before the final draft had been made public.

**MOTOKO RICH, *Gates Foundation Urges Moratorium*, New York Times, June 10, 2014**

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, one of the country's largest donors to educational causes and a strong backer of the academic guidelines known as the Common Core, has called for a two-year moratorium on states or school districts making any high-stakes decisions based on tests aligned with the new standards.

**STANLEY KURTZ, *Time for Congressional Hearings*, National Review Online, June 9, 2014**

It is a story of vast and very arguably unconstitutional changes made to America's education system, often without a single vote by an elected lawmaker. It is a story of standards adopted largely unseen — sometimes before the standards themselves were finalized — and with no public debate. It is the story of how a private foundation working hand in glove with the Obama administration made an end-run around democracy and the law.

What Gates doesn't say is that Common Core tries to overcome inequality by dumbing down all state standards to a mediocre national mean.

# Some NEA Resolutions Passed at the 2014 Convention in Denver, Colorado

**A-26. Voucher Plans and Tuition Tax Credits.** The Association opposes voucher plans, tuition tax credits, or other such funding arrangements that pay for students to attend sectarian schools.

**A-35. Federally or State-Mandated Choice/Parental Option Plans.** The Association opposes federally or state-mandated choice or parental option plans.

**B-1. Early Childhood Education.** The National Education Association supports early childhood education programs in the public schools for children from birth through age eight. These programs must be available to all children on an equal basis and should include mandatory kindergarten with compulsory attendance.

**B-16. Hispanic Education.** The Association believes in efforts that provide for grants and scholarships for higher education that will facilitate the recruitment, entry, and retention of Hispanics; involvement of Hispanics in lobbying efforts for federal programs; involvement of Hispanic educators in developing educational materials used in classroom instruction.

**B-24. Education of Refugee and Undocumented Children and Children of Undocumented Immigrants.** The Association supports access for undocumented students to financial aid and in-state tuition to state colleges and universities. The Association further believes that students who have resided in the United States for at least five years at the time of high school graduation should be granted legal residency status, and allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship.

**B-39. Multicultural Education.** The National Education Association believes that Multicultural education should promote the recognition of individual and group differences and similarities in order to reduce racism, homophobia, ethnic and all other forms of prejudice, and discrimination and to develop self-esteem.

**B-40. Global Education.** The National Education Association believes that global education imparts an appreciation of our interdependency in sharing the world's resources.

**B-51. Sex Education.** The Association recognizes that the public school must assume an increasingly important role in providing

the instruction. The Association also believes that it is the right of every individual to live in an environment of freely available information and knowledge about sexuality.

**B-82. Home Schooling.** The National Education Association believes that home schooling programs based on parental choice cannot provide the student with a comprehensive education experience. The Association also believes that home-schooled students should not participate in any extracurricular activities in the public schools.

**C-31. Student Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification.** The National Education Association believes that all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification, should be guaranteed a safe and inclusive environment within the public education system. The Association also believes that, for students who are struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identification, every school district and educational institution should provide counseling services and programs.

**E-3. Selection and Challenges of Materials and Teaching Techniques.** The Association deplores pre-publishing censorship, book-burning crusades, and attempts to ban books from school library media centers and school curricula.

**F-2. Pay Equity/Comparable Worth.** The "market value" means of establishing pay cannot be the final determinant of pay scales since it too frequently reflects the race and sex bias in our society.

**I-1. Peace and International Relations.** The Association believes that the United Nations furthers world peace and promotes the rights of all people by preventing war, racism, and genocide.

**I-9. Global Climate Change.** The Association believes that humans must take steps to change activities that contribute to global climate change.

**I-17. Family Planning.** The National Education Association supports family planning, including the right to reproductive freedom. The Association also urges the implementation of community-operated, school-based family planning clinics that will provide intensive counseling by trained personnel.

**I-22. Immigration.** The Association opposes any immigration policy that denies educational opportunities to immigrants and their children regardless of their immigration status.

**I-33. Freedom of Religion.** The Association opposes any federal legislation or mandate that would require school districts to schedule a moment of silence.

**I-47. Elimination of Discrimination.** The National Education Association is committed to the elimination of discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, economic status, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, and all other forms of discrimination. The Association encourages its members and all other members of the educational community to engage in courageous conversations in order to examine assumptions, prejudices, discriminatory practices, and their effects.

**I-58. Linguistic Diversity.** The Association believes that efforts to legislate English as the official language disregard cultural pluralism; deprive those in need of education, social services, and employment; and must be challenged.

**I-61. Equal Opportunity for Women.** The Association supports an amendment to the U.S. Constitution (such as the Equal Rights Amendment). The Association urges its affiliates to support ratification of such an amendment. The Association also supports the enactment and full funding of the Women's Educational Equity Act. The Association endorses the use of nonsexist language.

*The above text is excerpted from NEA Resolutions adopted at the 2014 NEA Convention. Much language has been omitted, but no words have been added or changed.*

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