



The Idaho Observer

Common Core: A Scheme to Rewrite Education

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Choose Freedom — STOP Common Core is a new action project of The John Birch Society with the purpose of helping to preserve parental control of education by stopping the top-down imposition of national standards on public schools, private schools, and home schools.

The controversial “standards” scheme, known informally as “Common Core,” is being foisted on state governments all across the country with a combination of taxpayer-funded bribes, outright deception, and federal bludgeoning. Despite America’s long traditions of local governance and separation of powers, the Obama administration and its establishment allies in both parties are determined to get the standards rolled out nationwide. So far, their progress has been remarkable.

If something is not done soon, the vast majority of American K-12 school children will be taught using dubious, federally backed national education “standards” that have come under fire from across the political spectrum. America’s kids, as well as their parents, will also be monitored and tracked in unprecedented ways from early childhood into the workforce. Opposition is growing by leaps and bounds, but government officials are not yet backing down.

Even with the backing of billionaire Bill Gates and the U.S. Department of Education, the entire “Common Core State Standards Initiative,” as it is referred to officially, was developed and rolled out with almost no serious media attention. The eerie silence, of course, helped proponents avoid scrutiny in the early phases, when it would have been much easier for critics to derail the scheme that will essentially nationalize education — along with the minds of America’s youth, and therefore, the nation’s future.

Education and policy experts who spoke with The New American blasted the standards themselves, the centralization and federalization of schooling, the long-term agenda behind the plan, and the nefarious tactics used to advance it.

With the federal government handing out massive grants only to state governments that comply, some 45 states and Washington, D.C., have already signed up to implement the full plan. Among the few states that have not jumped completely on the bandwagon, only Texas appears to be standing firm, with Minnesota, Nebraska, Virginia, and Alaska all reportedly flirting with various elements of the scheme.

Even the states that refuse to join — not to mention homeschoolers and private schools — may find themselves ensnared in the program due to national testing, college admission requirements, and more. However, experts expect resistance to accelerate.

The Standards

To avoid a national outcry, advocates of the national standards started out by focusing just on mathematics and English, two subjects expected to be the least controversial among the voting and taxpaying public. Even in those fields, however, critics have already slammed the curricula as woefully inadequate and a step back in terms of properly educating children. Meanwhile, standards for science and social studies are already in the works.

Common Core proponents continually use vague language about “excellence” in education, “raising the bar,” and getting America’s children “ready for the workforce” as the reason the standards should be implemented. For critics, however, the standards, which are copyrighted by the Washington, D.C.-based National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and were only released in mid-2010, represent a major step

backward. If something is not done to stop it, opponents say, a vast educational experiment will begin soon.

Dr. Sandra Stotsky, the 21st-century chair in teacher quality at the University of Arkansas’s Department of Education Reform, who refused to sign off on the standards as a member of the largely for-show “Common Core Validation Committee,” said the English Language Arts (ELA) standards do not compare well with existing standards in places such as Massachusetts, for example.

Among the most common criticisms leveled at the English and Language Arts Common Core standards is the emphasis on reading dry, technical writing — government documents and technical manuals, for example — as opposed to literary classics. At least 50 percent of reading assignments under the new standards will be “informational” texts. Consider, for instance, some of the “suggested” texts students are expected to read: “Recommended Levels of Insulation” by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency/U.S. Department of Energy, or Executive Order 13423: Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management.

Criticism of the math standards has been abundant as well. Another member of the Common Core Validation Committee, Stanford professor Dr. James Milgram, refused to sign off on the mathematics component. “The Core Mathematics Standards are written to reflect very low expectations,” he said, calling them “as non-challenging as possible” with “extremely serious failings.” In a letter outlining his concerns, Dr. Milgram even pointed to “actual errors” in sixth- and seventh-grade discussions about ratios and rates — “they are neither mathematically correct nor especially clear.”

Common Core critics have also found fault with the “suggested” textbooks. In history, for example, is *A History of US*, by Joy Hakim, a comprehensive textbook series on American history almost universally regarded as having a strong liberal bias — and worse. “Hakim’s material discloses many errors (including errors of fact, of chronology and of terminology) as well as unjustified assertions and some displays of bias,” explained author and historian Alice Whealey. “Joy Hakim should not attempt to write about Western history, particularly the history of Europe, because she obviously hasn’t had enough training in these subjects.”

In terms of science, the national standards’ shortcomings and controversies have received even more attention from critics. Known as the “Next Generation Science Standards,” the scheme was developed along with Common Core and managed by the same establishment-run outfit. In essence, it will force American students to learn a steady stream of controversial propaganda on everything from the theory of evolution to largely debunked theories advanced by UN global-warming alarmists about supposed human impacts on “climate change.”

Even more alarming, perhaps, is what opponents of the plan say is an agenda to essentially brainwash students. Countless examples have been provided by experts such as Dr. Stotsky and others on how texts and “analysis” are used to guide students’ thinking toward a pre-determined outcome. Much of the agenda involves what is euphemistically referred to as preparing students to live in a “global community.”

Another major concern is what comes along with the standards. Special interest groups, such as tax-funded abortion giant Planned Parenthood, which participated in writing the “National Sexuality Education Standards,” will be given access to American children through the math and literature curricula.

Obama’s Education Secretary Arne Duncan even admits openly that the Department of Education is cooperating with groups such as the UN, often dubbed a “dictators’ club,” to “improve” education in America. Speaking to UNESCO in late 2010, Duncan confirmed elements of what he called the “cradle-to-career education agenda” with goals that “can only be achieved by creating a strong cradle-to-career continuum that starts with early childhood learning and extends all the way to college and careers.”

“Education is still the key to eliminating gender inequities, to reducing poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, and to fostering peace,” he said, with “sustainability” being UN-speak for central planning and global government. “Today, education is a global public good unconstrained by national boundaries.... It is no surprise that economic interdependence brings new global challenges and educational demands.”

To learn more detailed information about Common Core and how to combat it, go to <http://www.jbs.org/videos/mediaitem/427-brilliant-anti-common-core-speech-by-dr-duke-pesta> and the links in “Learn More,” “Tell Others,” and “Take Action” boxes at <http://www.jbs.org/issues-pages/stop-common-core>, then take action by asking state legislators and congressmen to help stop the implementation of Common Core standards in our nation’s schools.