



The New Education Boondoggle: Common Core Standards

The dictionary defines “boondoggle” as: “work or activity that is wasteful or pointless but gives the appearance of having value.” And President Obama’s Common Core Standards education boondoggle is going to cost billions of dollars, which everyone involved — educators, administrators, career counselors, assorted federal bureaucrats, textbook writers, and textbook publishers — will be more than happy to rake in.



Why do we need new Common Core Standards, which will require expensive new textbooks and costly teacher retraining? Because education “reform” is the name of this game of deception that has been going on since 1965 when the Johnson administration enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The National Education Association (NEA) had worked for years to pry open the U.S. Treasury for federal “aid” to education, and they’ve succeeded beyond their wildest dreams.

And why does anyone think that this reform is any more likely to succeed than any of the previous reforms enacted by Congress? Will this expensive reform make the public schools any better? Will more kids be able to learn to read than at present? Experience has shown that education “reform” is simply the educators’ way of getting the taxpayer to pay more for our public schools. We are told that the reform is needed to solve an educational crisis. But when the present crisis is “solved,” a new crisis regularly emerges a few years later requiring more money from the taxpayer. And because most American taxpayers are addicted to public education, they will pay whatever is needed to make sure that all of our little Johnnies and Sallies get the promised quality education they so well deserve but will never get.

Already 45 states have adopted the Common Core Standards, which are expected to be in place in 2014. The enormous bill for all of this is going to hit local taxpayers in the face like a wet rag. Phyllis Schlafly’s *Education Reporter* (Jan. 2012) states:

The California Department of Education estimates that Common Core will cost the state about \$760 million. Outside estimates place California’s fiscal commitment at up to \$1.6 billion. California already expects a \$3 billion deficit at the end of fiscal year 2011, and a \$10 billion deficit in 2012-13. In addition, General Fund revenues for 2011-12 are lower than expected, triggering a \$2 billion cut to state programs beginning in January. “Adding up to a billion-and-a-half-dollar expenditure to implement national standards under these circumstances is fiscal madness,” said Lance Izumi, senior director of education studies at the Pacific Research Institute.



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But educational madness is not new to California. This is the same state that implemented Whole Language as the way to teach its precious children to read, with disastrous results, from which most functionally illiterate California children will never recover. Will the Common Core Standards improve literacy? According to Sandra Stotsky of the University of Arkansas' Department of Education, who sat in on a Common Core review panel, the Core's Language Arts standards "will lead to a *lower* level of literacy for all high school students." (Emphasis added.)

According to Liv Finne, director of the Washington Policy Center's education center, the total nationwide costs of implementing Common Core will be \$30 billion. She also stated quite bluntly, "Experts on standards are warning that the quality of these standards is mediocre and not internationally benchmarked, as advertised."

Already, some states are seeking an exit strategy from Common Core, which they hastily agreed to adopt before it was fully analyzed by its critics. In December, the Education Task Force of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) drafted model legislation that will provide states with a lawful way of getting out of Common Core. That should spell doom for the entire program, unless some states are stupid and corrupt enough to stick with it.

The subject of standards will be with us as long as public education exists and educational bureaucrats need more boondoggles. As long as the U.S. Treasury is available to support the educators, they will always come up with new ways to milk the federal cow. Yet there are thousands of private schools in America that don't have access to the federal gravy train and manage to educate their students a lot better than the public schools. What is the secret of their success? The freedom to use teaching methods and a curriculum that work. They don't need national standards or a Common Core because they have a philosophy of education generally based on traditional common sense.

Why can't the public schools learn from the private schools? In the year 2000, there were 27,223 private schools in America with over five million students and over 400,000 teachers. In contrast, there were 84,735 public schools with a student population of 45,366,000 and 2,905,000 teachers. There must be among those 27,000 private schools excellent curricula that could be used by the public schools at very low cost. But I have never heard of a public school ever adopting a successful private school curriculum.

And we haven't even considered the homeschool movement and the plethora of educational materials available at homeschool conventions and on the Internet. Think of it. Parents are able to educate their children at home without a principal, administrator, or state bureaucrat looking over their shoulders. They choose the best educational materials they can find at much lower cost than the state pays to indoctrinate a child in the public school. Homeschooling usually costs parents about \$1000 a year, at no expense to the taxpayer. However, the cost of educating a child, for example, in a New Jersey public school is \$13,800; in the District of Columbia, \$12,979; and in Vermont, \$11,835. And none of these public schools can provide the kind of quality education that homeschooling parents provide for their own children. Indeed, New York State spent \$14,119 per student in 2005 — more than any other state in the nation — and its students are hardly well educated.

And despite all this money spent by states on their public schools, they are still turning out thousands of poorly educated young adults who can barely read their diplomas.

In November 2007, the National Endowment for the Arts issued an alarming report on the present state of American literacy, "Reading at Risk." According to the report, the number of 17-year-olds who never



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read for pleasure increased from nine percent in 1984 to 19 percent in 2004. About half of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 never read books for pleasure.

Endowment Chairman Dana Gioia stated: "This is a massive social problem. We are losing the majority of the new generation. They will not achieve anything close to their potential because of poor reading." The survey found that only a third of high-school seniors read at a proficient level. "And proficiency is not a high standard," said Gioia. "We're not asking them to be able to read Proust in the original. We're talking about reading the daily newspaper."

But, according to Liv Finne of the Washington Policy Center, the Common Core will not improve literacy. So why are the educators so gung-ho on spending billions of dollars on implementing this educational fraud? It's because our government educators have become the cleverest extortionists on the planet. As long as politicians are willing to help them perform legal larceny, they are game for this mammoth heist. Billion-dollar robberies have become a great American phenomenon unlike any other anywhere else on the globe.

But what about standards? All they have to do is just collect the catalogs of private schools and copy what will work in the public schools. And most school catalogs are free! Everyone knows that in the primary grades you have to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic using traditional methods that have proved successful for hundreds of years. For example, back in the 1860s, the Packer Collegiate Institute in Brooklyn Heights, New York, listed its curriculum as including: modern languages, Latin, various branches of Literature, History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Natural, Moral, and Intellectual Philosophy, Music, Drawing, Painting, and more. So they knew how to educate back then. But today, the educators can't quite figure out what education should be without imposing a half-baked Common Core curriculum.

But it's not education that really concerns them. It's money. It's jobs. For, it isn't all that difficult to figure out what to teach in a school. What requires real ingenuity is figuring out a way of extorting billions from a long-suffering public which is becoming more and more disenchanted with the public schools but not disenchanted enough to abandon them.



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