



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 28, 2015

California Common Core: Kids Graded on “Gratitude,” “Sensitivity to Others”

The United States may be producing only one-tenth as many scientists as does China, but if California is any guide, Americans may soon excel in at least one area: “sensitivity.”

That is, as defined by modern educational overlords.

It’s all part of the new standards of Common Core, the controversial education program pushed by Barack Obama and the Department of Education. Writes the [Sacramento Bee](#):



Across the state [of California], report cards are undergoing a sea change in how students are measured for academic performance. Where teachers once graded students on traditional math or English skills, they now judge attributes such as grit, gratitude or being sensitive to others.

Districts are changing their report cards to reflect the new Common Core State Standards, which are intended to move students away from rote learning and memorization. Rather, critical thinking and analysis geared toward deeper understanding of academic subjects are the goals.

... For ... traditional academic subjects, teachers grade students on a 1-to-4 scale. But when it comes to attributes such as grit or being sensitive to others, they give students one of four marks: A for almost always, O for often, S for sometimes and R for rarely.



Critics, though, are marking this change S — for suspicious. For instance, *American Thinker’s* Thomas Lifson calls it “a sign of descent into full indoctrination camp mode” and [writes](#):

Obviously, there are no objective standards possible, so teachers will subjectively evaluate students on these qualities. And human nature being what it is, the degree to which a child conforms to the teacher’s own vision of human nature and the correct viewpoint. Education schools and teachers unions are both strongholds of left wing thinking, so it is fully predictable that children from conservative households will be regarded as uncooperative, insensitive, and ungrateful.

Many would point out that, because man will always have a tendency toward some type of prejudice, subjectivity in a system should be kept to a minimum. G.K. Chesterton once observed, “There are only two ways of governing: by a rule and by a ruler.” Proper rules exist to make things orderly and fair; the more man moves from rules to rulers, however — especially when those rulers are divorced from the highest rules (Truth) themselves — the more disorderly and unfair the system becomes. This is why we



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often hear talk about the “rule of law”; a capricious tyrant can impose an “order,” and it can constitute moral disorder.

Introducing subjectivity into a system does not have a good track record, either. Consider, for instance, the Soviet offensive against Finland in November 1939, an invasion almost *three times* the size of the Allied force that landed at Normandy on D-Day.

The Soviets got their heads handed to them.

While this was partially due to the Finns’ grit (and theirs was a real grade) and ingenuity, another factor was that Joseph Stalin had purged most of the top generals from the Soviet army. In Marxist regimes, such people are replaced not on the basis of merit, but on whether or not they toe the party line. The result was gross incompetence among the top military brass.

Meritocracy is under assault in America, too, as it’s being subordinated to egalitarianism. When it was discovered that girls didn’t score as highly as boys on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) years ago, for example, it was rewritten and made more “girl-friendly.” And there has been much focus on how blacks and Hispanics lag behind whites and Asians academically, with the assumption that equality of outcome must be achieved.

This isn’t easy in a meritocracy, where objective measures reign. After all, “There is absolutely no evidence that statistical proportionality is the norm anywhere on Earth,” as Dr. Walter Williams has [noted](#). And this is where subjectivity is invaluable to an egalitarian. The “rulers” can then simply “equalize” performance based on a political agenda, favoring certain groups or individuals and disadvantaging others. And there’s no shortage of zealous ideologues in education.

Yet not all these biases have to be conscious. People often are unaware of what motivates them and can find objectivity elusive even when they truly want to exercise it. It’s difficult for teachers, or anyone else, to divorce their feelings and biases — shaped by their inculcation and ideology — from their judgments.

Reflective of this exaltation of subjectivity is the goal, as the *Sacramento Bee* put it, of de-emphasizing “rote learning and memorization” in favor of “critical thinking and analysis.” This desire sounds noble and intellectual, but does it withstand scrutiny? It’s a different way of saying, as is educators’ wont today, we don’t just teach kids facts; we teach them how to think. And as I [wrote](#) in February 2014:

This is quite convenient. After all, it’s easy to test knowledge of facts; thus, such measures can reveal modern education as a fraudulent enterprise. But “how to think” is a bit more nebulous, and, if you define the expression of feelings-derived folderol as reason, your students cannot fail.

Yet there is a deeper reason why liberals eschew facts: they refute fiction. And since leftist agendas have no basis in reality, exposure to snippets of it is deadly; for, just as one small pin can pop a balloon, one little fact can shatter a rationalization.

Some would also point out that the goal of the “how” without the “what” is an exercise in futility. As a brilliant man I know put it:

First, thought cannot take place in a vacuum — there must be *something* (a “what”) to think about. Second, even if substance-free thought were possible, why should we teach students how to think in place of what to think? Implicit in the admonishment [“Don’t teach the ‘what’”] is that teaching students how to think is *superior* to teaching them what to think. Hence, if you teach students how to think in place of what to think, you also teach them what to think — that is, that “how” is



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superior to “what,” thereby violating the very admonishment you sought to uphold; the what — “how is superior to what” — preceded the how.

Put simply, the idea that “how” is superior to “what” is just that: an idea. And an idea is a thing, a thing is a “what,” so teaching an idea is teaching the “what.”

The even larger issue here is that with few people today believing in Truth, which is objective, there is a tendency to fancy that subjective reality is all that exists. In this way of thinking, then, subjectivity can’t be a problem; it’s just a matter of whose subjective preferences will hold sway. And that’s how you end up with a lack of common sense — and Common Core.



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