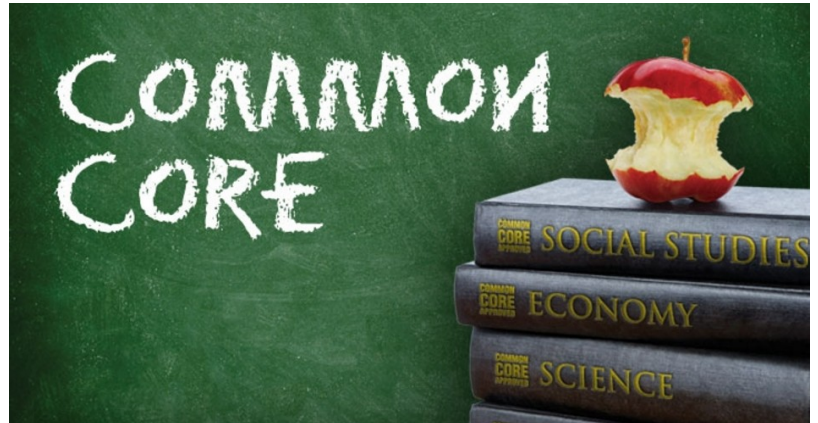




## Common Core: A Scheme to Rewrite Education

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.



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.

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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. One critic, Tennessee Liberty Alliance co-founder Glenn Jacobs, even suggested in a column that Common Core proponents were seeking to produce what Russian communists referred to as “New Soviet Men.” Others are calling the program “ObamaCore.”

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



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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.

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. While for some students, such as those on a vocational track who will not go to college, reading manuals may be appropriate, critics say a one-size-fits-all approach for the nation is worse than counterproductive.

Opponents, even among those involved with the standards, have been quick to lambaste the guidelines. “The major problem is the 50/50 division of reading instruction from K-12 — 10 standards for informational text and nine for literature — meaning that literary study is reduced and the opportunity for kids to develop critical thinking skills is reduced,” Dr. Sandra Stotsky, the 21st-century chair in teacher quality at the University of Arkansas’s Department of Education Reform, told *The New American* about the new standards.

Dr. Stotsky, 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. Numerous experts have pointed out that Massachusetts has actually been forced to water down its existing, relatively successful standards to conform with Common Core. In English, an estimated 60 percent of the classic literature, poetry, and drama previously required, such as Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, has been stripped from the standards, according to reports.

Despite all of the talk about “internationally benchmarked” standards being met, Common Core falls short again. Common Core doesn’t “compare with the kind of reading required for the Irish school-leaving exam or for school exit literature exams in Alberta and British Columbia,” Dr. Stotsky continued, adding that the standards are neither rigorous nor research-based. “They were written hastily by people who didn’t care how poorly written they were so long as informational text was about 50 percent of the reading curriculum.”

While she is not opposed to national ELA standards *per se*, assuming they are “first-class” and include state-relevant material, the existing Common Core standards have got to go, Stotsky said. “They need to be drastically revised, and written by people who have taught in K-12, know how to write ELA standards, and/or are literary scholars or well-trained high-school English teachers,” she explained, adding that the standards should be “rejected.”

Of course, criticism of the math standards has been abundant as well. Another member of the Common



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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.”

Again, as with the English standards, some state governments have had to lower their expectations to fall in line with Common Core. In Minnesota, officials refused to adopt the math standards because “ours were more rigorous and matched where kids were mastering those (skills) in their content areas,” according to state Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. Because of Common Core in California, students will no longer be required to take Algebra I by eighth grade. Massachusetts will also soon have students taking Algebra I in ninth grade or later rather than eighth, as currently required.

While English and math are the first subjects to be nationalized through Common Core, the aim is to eventually extend it to other areas as well — social studies, science, history, and more. High-school history teacher Thomas R. Eddlem summarized some of the issues he sees with the scheme in a note to *The New American*:

The real problem is that states have adopted history standards that are entirely process standards, with no subject content standards. For example, there’s nothing in Common Core about being able to explain why America seceded from Britain, or how the Constitution fulfills the ideal outlined in the Declaration of Independence of protecting God-given rights. It’s all process, such as: “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text.” As well, nearly all of the curriculum map — the unit goals, essential questions, resources used and assessment methods — is yet to be written. States that have adopted the vaguely worded standards have done so without the slightest clue as to how they will be implemented. Once the “public-private partnership” that created the standards fills in the details, that’s where the bias of the authors will show their real teeth.

Some Common Core critics have found fault with the “suggested” textbooks, as well. 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. “Examination of 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 in a scathing analysis of the book series for the Textbook League, which reviews educational material for accuracy. “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. It is a shame that Oxford University Press has let her get away with so many falsehoods and with such extreme exhibitions of bias.” Soon, however, children all across America will be reading the books.

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,” opponents say.



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“Human activities, such as the release of greenhouse gases from burning fossil fuels, are major factors in the current rise in Earth’s mean surface temperature (global warming),” the elementary-school standards claim, despite the fact that even climate alarmists admit there has been no “global warming” in over 15 years and that CO<sub>2</sub> released from fossil fuels represents a tiny fraction of the greenhouse gases present naturally in the atmosphere. Evolution is also heavily emphasized as “fundamental” in the controversial standards, even though more than half of Americans reject the theory in scientific polls and, to date, there is no fossil record showing one type of animal morphing into another, despite millions of fossils collected.

Aside from the blatant propaganda and the obvious political agenda in the standards, however, critics say the real problem is in the centralization. Even *if* the standards were radically revised to be better than any in existence, or had been devised by people with whom one may agree with politically, they can always be changed. In fact, the organizations behind Common Core admit that explicitly: “The Standards are intended to be a living work: as new and better evidence emerges, the Standards will be revised accordingly,” says the official website for the standards.

While proponents of Common Core point to some countries with national standards that do better than the United States academically as evidence of why the United States needs them as well, the vast majority of nations where students perform more poorly than Americans have nationalized education, too. Top-down, one-size-fits-all education will not improve outcomes, but it will almost certainly be used to control and manipulate children, rewarding those who faithfully follow government dogma. The problem with Common Core, then, aside from the poor standards themselves, is largely philosophical and principled: Government should not have such power in the first place.

### **The Real Agenda**

Totalitarian leaders from Hitler to Stalin and everywhere in between have always sought to centralize and control education. The reason is simple: Whoever molds the minds of the youth can eventually dominate the population, even if it takes a generation or two. That is why tyrants in recent centuries have demanded compulsory, government-led education. Hitler made clear that he wanted to use “education” as a tool to mold German children in accordance with the National Socialist regime’s despotic and murderous ideology. So did Stalin, and numerous other infamous tyrants and mass-murderers. As Karl Marx noted in his *Communist Manifesto*, government-controlled schooling is essential to achieving the goals of socialism.

In his masterpiece *On Liberty*, renowned British philosopher and parliamentarian John Stuart Mill succinctly explained the inherent problems with government schools. “A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another; and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government ... it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body,” he wrote.

In the United States, though, people are starting to wake up. On the Left and on the Right, criticism of Common Core standards, methods, and the entire agenda continues to grow louder and louder. From the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute to the establishment’s liberal-oriented Brookings Institution, the scheme is coming under assault. Increasing numbers of teachers, experts, and more are speaking out, too.

Criticism of the standards and the expected results has grown so loud that even some establishment media have finally been forced to report on the controversies. On April 6, for instance, the *Washington*



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*Post* published a public-school teacher's resignation letter that lambasted the program. In his now-public resignation letter to school officials, social studies teacher Gerald Conti of New York said recent developments could no longer be tolerated.

"'Data driven' education seeks only conformity, standardization, testing and a zombie-like adherence to the shallow and generic Common Core, along with a lockstep of oversimplified so-called Essential Learnings," Conti wrote in his letter, which has "gone viral" on the Internet. "Creativity, academic freedom, teacher autonomy, experimentation and innovation are being stifled in a misguided effort to fix what is not broken in our system of public education."

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."

Mary Black, a veteran educator, has been sounding the alarm about Common Core for months in public seminars about the standards. Having spent almost four decades teaching students of all ages before becoming curriculum director at FreedomProject Education, an independent K-12 online classical school, Black knows what works and what does not. She warned *The New American* that Common Core and its poor standards are part of a much broader agenda, one that represents a "significant threat."

The standards, of course, are highly problematic in and of themselves. "My review of the Common Core standards indicated that they were designed to teach students what to think and not how to think," Black said, echoing concerns expressed by numerous analysts who have investigated the scheme. "The literary classics have been stripped and replaced with books promoting a socialist agenda.... It is certain that it will leave students unable to think for themselves."

However, there may be even more pressing problems, Black continued. "As an educator, I admit the poor standards are not my major concern," she said. "It is what comes along with the standards that is most concerning." Among her examples, Black cited the fact that 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. Pointing to some of the controversial material — such as asking students to identify different types of "family structures" and discuss ways of "showing respect" toward them, for instance — she urged parents with children in school to read the standards for themselves. After all, this goes against beliefs that both liberals and conservatives hold dear. For conservatives, such teaching will often fly in the face of moral strictures they want to instill in their children. For liberals, the standards, which require that teachers demean and belittle the beliefs of a great majority of students, should smack of bullying and intolerance that they so often preach against.

Black also noted that because Common Core is copyrighted, it cannot be altered by anyone other than the owners of the copyright. As such, any special interest group that finds favor with those in charge will be able to gain instant access to America's students. Concerned parents, meanwhile, will be left with few-to-no options to prevent it.

According to Black and other experts, documentation also shows Common Core is actually a step in the process toward achieving a longtime goal of the United Nations and its supporters: a one-world education system. The UN, of course, has long sought to harmonize global educational standards. And billionaire Bill Gates — one of the primary figures behind Common Core — has expressed devotion to a





similar agenda.

“Quite simply, control is the real goal,” Black continued. “Read about the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, David Coleman, Sir Michael Barber, Arne Duncan, and the reality will become very clear. These people are socialists and globalists. The goal is not education but the production of compliant, dependent, uneducated citizens. This is the citizenry needed to implement the United Nation’s Agenda 21 with the help of UNESCO’s Education for All program. Not surprisingly, Common Core and Education for All are very similar because Bill Gates has been involved with both and is a proponent of UN-directed education.”

Indeed, 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 — albeit subtly and couched in nice-sounding terms — 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.”

Probably unintentionally, Duncan acknowledged against interest the top-down structure of the new standardization, rather than bottom-up and directed by parents. He continued by telling UNESCO about the “unique opportunity to transform our education system”: “I’ve said that America is now in the midst of a ‘quiet revolution’ in school reform,” Duncan continued. “Before the 1960s, almost all policymaking and education funding was a state and local responsibility. The Obama administration has sought to fundamentally shift the federal role, so that the department is doing much more to support reform and innovation in states, districts, and local communities.”

Quoting former South African President Nelson Mandela, Duncan noted that education “is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” “The United States provides over a billion dollars annually to partner countries working on educational reform,” Duncan boasted, as the federal government racks up trillions in debt. “Our goal for the coming year will be to *work closely with global partners, including UNESCO*, to promote qualitative improvements and system-strengthening.” (Emphasis added.)

### **Non-CC States, Homeschoolers, and Private Schools**

Despite the growing outcry surrounding Common Core, analysts say that without a significant change in course, it is only a matter of time before the nationalized education scheme ensnares virtually every student in America. Homeschoolers, private-schooled children, and even kids in states that have refused to participate will likely all be impacted by the standards, sometimes without even being aware of it. Consider, for example, the rush by virtually all major publishers to align their textbooks with Common Core. Most parents have no idea of the major changes taking place.

Meanwhile, a national testing regime based on the new standards is already being rolled out, with the Common Core-aligned tests planned for introduction by 2014. Two “consortia” receiving hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars from the federal government, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium



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(SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), were put in charge of developing standardized tests to go along with Common Core. Students will be tested regularly from the third grade to ensure that their Common Core-based education is proceeding smoothly. All of that private data will be available in perpetuity to the federal government and other as-yet unknown parties.

Even students who do not live in one of the states using Common Core-aligned standardized tests may ultimately be forced to learn from the same set of standards. Consultant David Coleman, widely regarded as the “architect” of Common Core, became president of the College Board last year — all but ensuring that the SATs, which are produced by the College Board, will be aligned with the new standards. Of course, SATs are used nationwide in admissions to higher-learning institutions.

If the testing regimes and the flood of Common Core-aligned textbooks are not enough to guarantee that all American students learn from the same set of controversial standards, there are other means being pursued as well. While countless well-intentioned conservatives and libertarians have pushed the idea of tax-funded “vouchers” for private schools, the use of taxpayer money for private education may be a Trojan horse to ensure government control. In the state of Wisconsin’s application for a waiver from No Child Left Behind, as just one example, that was illustrated clearly.

“The Accountability Design Team developed a statewide accountability framework that specifically includes all state schools, including traditional public schools and charter schools, regardless of Title funding, *as well as private schools participating in Parental Choice Programs (PCP),*” reads page 48 of Wisconsin’s ESEA Flexibility Request. *“All schools receiving state funds will be part of the state accountability and support system.”* (Emphasis added.)

Separately, Catholic schools across America are getting ready to deal with Common Core as well. The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) has not “officially” endorsed the standards. However, it is already working to help Catholic schools prepare to implement the program, according to news reports. “What we have done at NCEA is develop what we call the Common Core Catholic Identity Initiative,” said Presentation Sister Dale McDonald, director of public policy and educational research at the NCEA. Critics say despite not offering an “official endorsement” of the standards, the NCEA is actively promoting Common Core. Other religious schools are reportedly hopping on the bandwagon, too.

Even when state governments say no, that does not necessarily mean the end of Common Core. “In my home state where legislators responded to constituent demand and halted implementation of CCSS [Common Core State Standards], some teachers have publicly stated that they know best about education and because they think it is best to teach to these standards, they intend to do so,” FPE’s Mary Black said. “The arrogance and elitism of the proponents of CCSS are apparent as they ignore the will of the people, including many parents, which was duly exercised through legislative procedure.”

While the controversial school-standardization scheme does not directly apply to home educators yet, experts and advocates say the effects are already starting to be felt. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), a non-profit organization dedicated to defending and advancing the constitutional right of parents to direct the education of their children, is on the front lines of the battle. According to the HSLDA, which has been expressing concerns about “Common Core” for years, the controversial scheme is problematic for several reasons.

“Our concern with the Common Core is twofold,” HSLDA Director of Federal Relations William Estrada



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told The New American. “The first is that the success of homeschooling shows that kids do best when parents are in control of educational decisions. Common Core centralizes what kids are taught, how they are taught, and what they should learn, in the hands of a few educational bureaucrats at the national level — completely cutting out parents, teachers, and local school boards.”

“The second major concern is that a national curriculum and national standards will eventually be broadened to include homeschoolers, which would eliminate the ability of parents to tailor their educational message to each specific child,” said Estrada. A wide range of organizations and activists have expressed similar fears about the national education scheme.

Indeed, the first symptoms of the “Common Core” problem are already being felt by the homeschooling community. Among the most serious: An increasing number of home education-related companies have started aligning their curricula and learning materials with the national program. In fact, at least 10 popular homeschool curricula produced by various companies now conform to the national scheme. There are probably many more. With the advent of testing next year, those numbers are expected to keep growing, too.

### **How It Happened**

The U.S. Department of Education was created by an act of Congress and signed into law by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, and it has been gradually increasing in power since then. Leaving centuries of history aside, the modern effort to nationalize education picked up steam in the 1990s, when a coalition of establishment-minded governors and corporate titans came together to push the centralization agenda under the guise of improving standards. In 1996, Achieve, Inc. was born, giving a major boost to the plan and to longtime proponents of smashing state and local sovereignty in education, while centralizing control over schools at the federal level through a byzantine “public-private partnership” labyrinth.

The overarching agenda was summarized neatly in a 2008 column on “education reform” for the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) by former IBM CEO and current “Achieve” Chairman Emeritus Louis Gerstner, Jr. A prominent member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a Bilderberg summit attendee, Gerstner co-chaired Achieve until 2002, when he formed the Teaching Commission with a list of prominent establishment figures.

In the *WSJ* column, Gerstner offered what he described as a “prescription for leadership from the Obama administration.” Among the myriad recommendations: “abolish all local school districts” and “establish a set of national standards for a core curriculum.” Also on the agenda were extending the school day and the school year.

In 2009, the Washington, D.C.-based National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers — both non-profit organizations despite official sounding names — quietly announced their intent to create new standards. Achieve and its cohorts were put in the driver’s seat. After hiring supposed “experts” to design the scheme, the virtually unknown coalition quietly got to work drafting and pushing the agenda to nationalize education.

### **Forces Behind Common Core**

That critics claim that one of the primary agendas behind Common Core is not-before-seen social engineering should come as no surprise, considering the process and forces behind the standards. Laboring in secret, faceless bureaucrats with little to no experience in relevant fields — identified publicly only after a major public outcry — put together the scheme with funding from trade groups and





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massive tax-exempt foundations. A for-show “Validation Committee” was set up, though criticism from the committee’s experts was largely ignored.

The most high-profile foundation to bankroll Common Core — and reportedly the biggest single source of funds — was the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, a Rockefeller-allied organization with a dubious history of financing everything from population control and pro-abortion forces to various United Nations agencies and schemes. In 2010, the Gates Foundation even received the “Population Award” from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), which was exposed in Congress for facilitating the Communist Chinese dictatorship’s barbaric “one-child policy” and coerced abortions. Other UNFPA award winners include Planned Parenthood, also financed by Gates.

Speaking to the National Conference of State Legislators, billionaire Bill Gates, who made his fortune in computer software, explained one of the long-term goals of Common Core. “We’ll know we’ve succeeded when the curriculum and the tests are aligned to these standards,” he said. In a nutshell, that is the endgame: a national educational system run from the shadows by unaccountable forces that will ultimately capture the minds of America’s youth at an early age.

In addition to the Gates foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, also close to the United Nations and a big funder of “sustainability” causes, helped fund the development of Common Core as well.

Another controversial non-profit involved in Common Core is the Carnegie Corporation of New York, an establishment powerhouse that funds everything from the Council on Foreign Relations to the Atlantic Council.

Unsurprisingly, the CFR itself has been a staunch proponent of the standards.

### **Federal Carrots and Sticks**

Almost immediately following the public announcement on Common Core, the Obama administration and the federal leviathan it leads began the push to ensure compliance nationwide. Indeed, widespread acceptance of Common Core thus far has been almost exclusively attributed to the taxpayer largess offered under various programs. One key element in getting states to comply was the \$50 billion “State Fiscal Stabilization Fund,” part of the 2009 “stimulus” bill, which distributed funds to state governments that agreed to adopt Common Core and create or improve systems to track students (see [“Orwellian Nightmare: Data-mining Your Kids”](#)).

Obama’s controversial and unconstitutional \$10 billion “Race to the Top” program was also crucial. Billions of federal dollars have been awarded to state governments from a fund for the scheme, which was also established with \$4.5 billion under the 2009 so-called stimulus bill. With federal aid, of course, comes federal control. And to be eligible for the massive grants, state governments were forced to adopt Common Core or other “internationally benchmarked standards” while creating “data systems” to track students. Some \$350 million was set aside “to help fund common assessments for states that adopt common international standards,” the Department of Education announced, referring to the national testing regime set to be rolled out as early as next year.

Unveiled at a 2009 event at U.S. Department of Education headquarters was an array of other federal grants worth billions of dollars — much of it from the “stimulus” bill — aimed at usurping control over education and America’s youth from families and communities. Among the programs outlined in a Department of Education press release: a \$650 million “Investing in Innovation Fund,” a \$297 million “Teacher Incentive Fund,” and more. Another \$3.5 billion in “School Improvement Grants” was



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earmarked for states to support “efforts to reform struggling schools.”

Another key element in getting state governments to agree to the national standards was the issuance of waivers from the Bush-era “No Child Left Behind.” Without authority from Congress, the Department of Education announced in 2011 that it would grant waivers from NCLB to state governments in exchange for obedience to various federal decrees and the adoption of Common Core or other standards approved by the administration. Acceptance of Common Core-aligned testing was also required.

More than a few members of Congress and state officials feigned outrage by the waiver-in-exchange-for-obedience-to-Obama scheme, but the administration went forward anyway.

Local school districts are in the administration’s crosshairs as well. In May of 2012, the U.S. Department of Education began offering huge taxpayer-funded incentives to school districts that adopted the controversial scheme.

“This district-level program is a full-scale assault on state sovereignty,” explains the group Truth in American Education, which opposes the Common Core plan. “It is a power-grab through which the federal government will skirt citizens’ elected statewide bodies and negotiate directly with school districts to embrace federal policy. It will also undermine the state governmental structure by grouping school districts together on policy decisions and thereby making it more difficult for the group to disengage from federal programming.”

### **Skirting the Law and the People**

Proponents of Common Core continue to downplay concerns about the controversial scheme by incessantly parroting two primary lines: the standards are “state-led” and “voluntary.” Because multiple federal laws specifically prohibit any federal direction, control, or supervision of curricula, programs of instruction, and instructional material in elementary or secondary schools, the whole scheme would be unlawful — not to mention unconstitutional — if the standards were not, in fact, “state-led” and “voluntary.”

However, the idea that Common Core is being driven by state governments is easily shown to be bogus — neither legislators nor elected officials played any significant role in developing the scheme, and in fact, states had to agree to the standards in 2009, before the standards were even published, to be eligible for federal bribes. Instead, as even establishment analysts have admitted, Common Core is a set of *national* standards pushed by the federal government and created by “consultants” funded by unaccountable billionaires.

Dr. Sandra Stotsky explained that when “states signed on to common core standards, they did not realize ... that they were transferring control of the school curriculum to the federal government.” Even if it were truly a “state-led” initiative, however, critics say it would still be a bad idea, as parents and local school districts continue to lose control over education.

Are the standards voluntary? For now, the argument could be made that they are technically not mandatory, since no state government can be forced to comply. However, the fact that the federal government is bribing state governments with taxpayer money to go along with the plan — not to mention the federally funded national testing regimes — virtually ensures that American students will have to submit to some elements of Common Core whether they want to or not.

### **Political Opposition**

Despite the fact that Common Core has been in the works for years and already spread its tentacles far



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and wide under the radar, Americans are gradually waking up to the plot. Opposition to the standards is soaring, as well. In Congress, lawmakers are making various moves to stop the scheme. At the state level, more than a few state governments are working on efforts to withdraw.

The powerful Republican National Committee (RNC) adopted a resolution calling on the GOP to stand firm against the centralization plot. Heavy-hitting organizations and grassroots activists across America are getting fired up, too, organizing protests and working with policymakers at all levels. Even Big Labor is calling for a moratorium on implementing some parts of the scheme.

In the U.S. Senate, Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) has been leading the opposition so far. With outrage growing nationwide about Common Core, Grassley began circulating a letter among his colleagues calling for a prohibition on the Department of Education's bribes to state governments. If approved, the proposed measure would also stop federal funding of the nominally private entities working to develop the standards.

The Grassley letter, dated April 26, was sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee's Education Subcommittee leadership. It was signed by eight other senators: Mike Lee (R-Utah), Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), James Inhofe (R-Okla.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), and Ted Cruz (R-Texas). The coalition of senators sought an amendment to the appropriations bill funding the Department of Education that would restore state decision-making.

"The decision about what students should be taught and when it should be taught has enormous consequences for our children," the senators wrote. "Therefore, parents ought to have a straight line of accountability to those who are making the 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."

In the House of Representatives, lawmakers were also working to stop Common Core. Led by Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-Mo.), a coalition including over 30 congressmen sent a letter to Education Secretary Arne Duncan outlining their concerns. The lawmakers also suggested that the Obama administration was moving forward with "education policy reform" without authorization or input from Congress.

"Such an action is, at best, in contravention with precedent," the representatives wrote, noting that the authority to move forward with some of the administration's schemes ended in 2008 without congressional reauthorization.

"As representatives from states across the nation, we understand the diverse cultures and state-specific education needs that exist in America," the House letter to Secretary Duncan explains. "Moreover, we believe that state-based education policies are vital to the successful education of a child. As with most one-size-fits-all policies, Common Core standards fail to address the specific needs of our states."

More recently, the House of Representatives passed a bill on July 19 aimed at reducing the unconstitutional federal role in education while restraining the administration's abuse of "No Child Left Behind" waivers as a tool to coerce state governments. However, the legislation is not expected to go far in the Democrat-controlled Senate. Plus, Obama has reportedly already threatened to veto the House measure, dubbed the Student Success Act, all but ensuring its demise.

At the state level, policymakers in some 20 states are working to stop Common Core, too, according to data compiled by researchers. Aside from all of the other major controversies surrounding the centralization of education and the standards themselves, the expected costs to taxpayers are



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reportedly starting to raise some eyebrows in state capitols. According to estimates cited by the conservative-leaning Heritage Foundation, which has blasted Common Core on multiple fronts, the implementation of the new standards could cost cash-strapped state governments some \$16 billion.

More than a few states have started fighting back. In Indiana, for example, the legislature passed a bill putting Common Core implementation on “pause” pending a proper review of the standards, the costs, and more. “I have long believed that education is a state and local function and we must always work to ensure that our students are being taught to the highest academic standards and that our curriculum is developed by Hoosiers, for Hoosiers,” declared Republican Gov. Mike Pence in May when he signed the legislation. The state has also reportedly stopped participating in the national testing regime, too — at least for now. Michigan and South Carolina have targeted the scheme, as well.

Multiple other state legislatures also have bills to withdraw from Common Core. Separately, several states have also withdrawn from the national testing consortia. School districts, too, are taking action, with the Douglas County, Colorado, district, for instance, recently approving a resolution unanimously rejecting Common Core in favor of its own higher-quality standards. Experts say this is just the beginning of the resistance.

At the grassroots level, citizens all across America are rallying to stop the new standards in their states. Online rallies on Twitter organized by Parent Led Reform and Truth in American Education in April and May reached millions of people. With organizations nationwide such as The John Birch Society, Eagle Forum, Heritage, Cato, FreedomWorks, the Heartland Institute, the Pioneer Institute, American Principles Project, and countless others expressing firm opposition, the groundswell of activism is expected to keep growing. In the media, more than a few heavyweights, such as Glenn Beck, have been helping to stir opposition as well.

In a series of interviews with *The New American*, Joy Pullmann, education research fellow with the non-partisan Heartland Institute, outlined resistance to Common Core. In late July, she said that despite summer typically being slow for legislation, there had been several noteworthy developments. Among the most important: The number of states dropping or considering dropping Common Core tests is growing. In Florida, for example, the state’s top lawmakers issued a strongly worded letter calling on the Sunshine State to quit the Common Core-aligned testing consortium. Oklahoma, Alabama, and Utah have already done so, and North Dakota just dropped its membership in one of the testing groups. “Because the tests are the linchpin and capstone of Common Core, and to me the very worst of the whole edifice, I’d say this is a big deal and will accelerate,” Pullmann concluded.

It appears to analysts that Common Core is the final step in the decades-old process of nationalizing education — a longtime goal of virtually every totalitarian regime in recent history. With the minds of the youth and the future of America at stake, it is time to turn the tide and get government out of the way. With the groundswell of opposition continuing to expand, it is certainly possible. A good place to start would be getting the federal government out of schools entirely and immediately by shutting down the Department of Education.

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