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Expert Explores Link Between Federal Data Mining and Common Core

In an [exclusive studio interview](#) with *The New American* magazine's Dr. Duke Pesta, [Heartland Institute](#) Education Research Fellow Joy Pullmann outlined the crucial link between the Obama-backed "[Common Core](#)" nationalization of schooling, the federally funded tests that go with the standards, and the [vast data-gathering apparatus](#) being erected by the administration to gather private information on U.S. students. The Common Core assessments, which have already been adopted by about four in five state governments, are a key element underpinning the entire scheme, she explained.



"The first thing people have to know is that testing is inseparable from Common Core," said Pullmann, a leading analyst focused on the education "reform" agenda with the non-partisan Heartland Institute. "When governors signed a bunch of documents saying 'yeah, we want to do this nationalization of education project,' one of the things that they signed on to was the Common Core initiative, and they defined it as standards plus assessments. So those assessments, those tests, are the enforcement mechanism to make sure that Common Core gets into the minds and into the hands of teachers and children in the classrooms."

There are currently two testing consortia developing Common Core assessments for state governments with federal tax dollars, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Several state governments have [started to withdraw](#) from the testing schemes following massive public outcries, but both organizations are marching full speech ahead despite the growing outrage among parents, teachers, and experts.

As part of the agreements signed between state governments and the federally backed consortia, Pullmann explained in the interview, data gathered on children at school will be provided to the organizations. As an example of the types of data being sought, she said one of the consortia was interested in information on "student behavior, their attitudes, their persistence, their discipline, and so forth — a lot of non-academic things that a lot of parents aren't comfortable with."

"The reason I call this the student-data pipeline is because states have promised these organizations they'll give this information to them — it's basically a blank check; whatever information they think is necessary," Pullmann explained. "And they've promised that they'll change their state laws or their regulations according to whatever is necessary to get that carried out."

Because the testing regime is funded by the U.S. taxpayers via federal government, meanwhile, the assessment consortia have promised to deliver the information they gather on students to bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., she added. The agreement between the Obama administration's Education



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Department and the two testing organizations it funds, excerpted in the video interview, puts it succinctly: “The grantee must provide timely and complete access to any and all data collected at the state level to ED [the U.S. Department of Education].”

“We have a mass of student information available and open and unprotected — personal information about kids — that is literally being collected by Common Core,” Pullman continued. Indeed, as she points out in the interview, the administration has essentially re-written federal privacy regulations — without approval from Congress — to claim that information on children can be shared without parental knowledge or consent.

Aside from the data-mining schemes, Pullmann said other problems with nationalizing education through Common Core include the fact that it enhances the education monopoly already held by government. That will allow special interests, which invariably seek out power sources, to push their agenda more easily. “Just creating that sort of structure for education really makes it inevitable that bad things are going to be perpetuated on everybody beneath that structure,” she said, citing the history of humanity to illustrate the argument against creating such centers of power to begin with.

Beyond that, the agenda goes even deeper. “The real goal is social engineering,” Pullmann said, echoing widespread concerns among Common Core critics across the political spectrum. “I don’t like to use explosive sorts of things like that, but this is very obvious — the goal is to create a workforce that responds to the needs of the 21st century, as determined by the central planners.”

Dr. Pesta, who also serves as academic director at [FreedomProject Education](#) and an English professor at the University of Wisconsin, recently [compared](#) the effort to impose Common Core and associated government schemes on the American people to a frog being boiled alive over time. In the latest interview, he said that FPE, an online K-12 school offering classical education, has been working with Catholic schools. Many have been adopting Common Core standards in the mistaken belief that it would not pull them closer to the federal government, which Pesta noted had become increasingly hostile to Christianity and religious freedom.

For more information on Common Core, Dr. Pesta suggests exploring [TheNewAmerican.com](#), which has been staying on top of major developments, and checking out the Heartland Institute’s page at www.heartland.org/common-core.

Photo at top: Dr. Duke Pesta interviewing Joy Pullmann



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