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Feds Building Massive Common Core-linked Databases on Your Kids

Using a combination of taxpayer-funded bribes and soft coercion, the Obama administration is building massive [Common Core](#)-linked databases and quietly vacuuming up gargantuan amounts of private information on American schoolchildren, a new study by education experts revealed. Through a dizzying array of federal and federally funded state programs, the political class in Washington, D.C., is working to essentially eliminate any semblance of privacy — even to the point of targeting students' values and beliefs. The plot appears to be unprecedented in scope, seeking to collect some 400 data points on each child.



Unsurprisingly, all of it is “intimately connected” to the [Common Core nationalization of education](#), said the authors of the Pioneer Institute report, entitled “[Cogs in the Machine: Big Data, Common Core, and National Testing](#).” All of the data collected through the federally funded national testing regime aligned with the controversial national standards, for example, will be made available to the U.S. Department of Education. However, as *The New American* magazine [reported in August of last year in a major investigation](#), the Orwellian data-mining schemes associated with Common Core are also contributing to the [growing uprising among parents against the entire plot](#).

“These expansive data structures are intimately connected to Common Core, in several ways,” the new report explains. “Not only will the data sent to the [federally funded Common Core-aligned] assessment consortia be made available to the federal government, but the national standards create a unified ‘taxonomy’ that facilitates common instructional materials and technology for data-collection. Moreover, because Common Core focuses not on academic knowledge but rather on ‘skills’ that involve attitudes and dispositions, it paves the way for assessments and digital platforms that measure such attributes.”

The 92-page report, published by the non-partisan Pioneer Institute, also highlights a number of radical developments that would almost certainly shock American parents to the core — if only they knew of it. The Obama administration’s voracious appetite for the most sensitive data on American children, for example, is illustrated well in a report published last year by the U.S. Department of Education entitled “[Promoting Grit, Tenacity and Perseverance](#).” The government authors of that document expressed strong interest in monitoring U.S. students’ “beliefs, attitudes, dispositions, values and ways of perceiving oneself.” The Education Department report also calls for measuring non-cognitive attributes such as “psychological resources.”

If that was not chilling enough on its own, consider some of the tools outlined in the report explaining



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how it will all be collected. One of the schemes, for instance, involves researchers using “functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) and physiological indicators [that] offer insight into the biology and neuroscience underlying observed student behaviors.” As *The New American* has [previously reported](#), the administration’s deeply controversial report also envisions hooking students up to cameras that can record “facial expressions,” as well as “skin sensors” that would monitor students’ physiological reactions. Some of that technology is already in use as part of various federally funded education programs, the Education Department report explains, even offering pictures.

“Cogs in the Machine” co-author Joy Pullmann, who also serves as education research fellow with the non-partisan Heartland Institute, highlighted some of the troubling implications behind the federal efforts. “This sort of character development and monitoring has traditionally been the domain of parents,” she explained. “But the Grit report clearly implies that families can’t be trusted to inculcate values and attitudes.” Pullmann has also been a key player in drawing attention to the crucial links between Common Core, the federally funded national testing regime aligned with the standards, and the explosion of federally funded data-mining schemes aimed at American kids and families.

Exploiting advances in technology, the education establishment plans to work toward one of its key longtime goals: tracking of all students for purposes that sound suspiciously similar to failed central-planning experiments of the past. “It allows 21st-century disciples of foundational [Progressive John Dewey](#) to accomplish what was out of reach before: collecting data on every child, beginning with preschool or even earlier, and using it to track the child throughout his academic and professional career,” explains the “Cogs in the Machine” report’s executive summary. Indeed, the Obama administration has been [fairly open](#) about its desire to track and know just about everything on American children, too.

According to the “Cogs in the Machine” report, the self-styled “progressive” education reformers see the technological advances as an opportunity to be seized in advancing their controversial goals. “It is an idea that dates back to the Progressive era,” said report co-author Emmett McGroarty, executive director of the Education Project at the American Principles Project. “It is based in a belief that government ‘experts’ should make determinations about what is successful in education, what isn’t, and what sorts of education and training are most likely to produce workers who contribute to making the United States competitive in the global economy.”

Quietly and largely under the radar, Washington, D.C., has been erecting the massive, unconstitutional apparatus that would make George Orwell blush. “For many years the federal government has been using grants to induce states to build increasingly sophisticated, identical student data systems,” the report explains. “More recently, the federal government has worked with private entities to design and encourage states to participate in other related initiatives such as the Data Quality Campaign, the Early Childhood Data Collaborative, and the National Student Clearinghouse. The National Education Data Model, with its suggestion of over 400 data points on each child, provides an ambitious target for the states in constructing their data systems.”

Of course, the privacy implications of the federal efforts are hard to overstate. The Pioneer Institute study highlights the possibility that hackers might target the information, which could certainly be problematic. Even more troubling, though, is what government itself can and likely will do with all of that data on Americans. Meanwhile, despite occasional protestations from the architects of the surveillance regime targeting America’s children that the data will be “anonymous,” the report points out that Big Data “makes anonymization of an individual student’s information practically impossible.”



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Even children being homeschooled or enrolled in private schools may be engulfed, the authors explain. “Finally, the rush to collect and share students’ data implicates more fundamental problems,” the report continues. “It turns constitutional protections of individual autonomy and privacy on their head as government learns and records more and more about each citizen. His private sphere — his personal sanctum — shrinks. Even if government were to keep the information private, the very existence of a ‘dossier’ is immensely intimidating and inhibiting. This alters both civil society and the private realm, and not in the direction of greater freedom.”

To deal with the grave assaults on privacy, the authors of the new report also make a series of recommendations to protect student data — information which they say should be considered the property of each individual. Among other suggestions: Parents should ask and find out what data on their children is being collected. “If parents object to such data collection, they should opt out,” the authors said. The report also calls on state lawmakers to pass laws protecting student privacy while recommending that Congress undo last year’s “gutting” of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA.

“Most federal and state privacy laws are woefully inadequate,” explained co-author McGroarty with the American Principles Project. “Many were enacted over forty years ago and fail to protect against the power of modern computers and governments’ recent initiatives to create massive databases of personal information. The rights of children and their families are at stake.”

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