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Parents and Teachers Object to Common Core

The media are currently filled with reports that U.S. students are scoring poorly on international tests. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which compares 15-year-olds in most industrialized countries, reported that U.S. students dropped from 25th to 31st in math, 11th to 21st in reading, and 20th to 24th in science.

The solution offered for these low rankings is always that we should spend more money on schooling. But numerous studies of the billions of dollars we've spent on education in the last decade show that money has not improved U.S. student performance, and higher scoring foreign countries spend far less per pupil than we do.

Now we are told we need a new national system called Common Core (CC) standards, but this has provoked a grassroots uprising. Parents don't want federal control or a federal curriculum, and teachers don't like the CC tests.

Common Core advocates loudly proclaim that there isn't any CC curriculum, there are only standards based on which the local schools can write their own curriculum. But the CC tests (usually called assessments) are the mechanism of federal control over the curriculum because teachers must teach to the test.

As Common Core is beginning to be implemented by the states, parents and teachers are discovering many things they don't like. An Oak Forest, Illinois high school government class required students and their parents to fill out a questionnaire that identifies their positions on controversial political issues and then places themselves on a "political spectrum."

The best way to describe the leftwing bias of this curriculum is to quote some of the questions assigned to the students, all of which are ideologically slanted. Students are instructed to "put a check in front of each statement with which you agree."

Here are two of the pro-big government statements: "The government has an obligation to regulate businesses in order to preserve the environment for future generations." "Unregulated free enterprise benefits the rich at the expense of the poor."

Here are two more slanted statements: "The government should guarantee medical care for all citizens." "The federal government should guarantee the rights of homosexuals."

Common Core then requires the students to self-identify their political philosophy: "I consider myself A. liberal, B. conservative, C. don't know."

Here is one of the "outcomes" specified as the objective of this biased survey. "Students will be familiar with: 1. Fascism as an historical example of a reactionary group. 2. American Revolution as an historical example of a revolutionary viewpoint."

After checking all the statements with which the students agree, students are given a so-called "Performance Task" to "Conduct a Political Spectrum Interview with someone 40 years or older" using this same survey.

It's no wonder that parents are upset about this assignment, which asks for information that is none of the school's business. This survey, published by "The Center for Learning," is from a textbook called "U.S. Government 2," which is part of the Common Core curriculum used by Oak Forest High School.

A Common Core-approved history textbook, "The American Experience" published by Prentice-Hall, gives an account of World War II that the "greatest generation" would not recognize. World War II is presented primarily by photos of the devastation of Hiroshima with text from John Hersey's article on "Hiroshima."

The Washington Post published a letter from a Delaware teacher who is highly critical of Common Core because she was instructed that she is required "to teach the curriculum word-for-word." Also, she must "stop teaching for 6 weeks in the spring to make sure our students pass that test."

New Mexico Senator Tim Keller described in a recent editorial the complaints he hears from parents who "stress deep objection to the continuing trend of out-of-state, for-profit testing companies' intrusion into the classroom." There's just too much testing driven by those with a nefarious "incentive to make the case for more testing."

Of course, tests are important to measure performance. But Common Core tests are a big money-making industry and are used by the Obama Administration to control the content of the curriculum.

And some of the tests sound downright ridiculous. Here is how a New York City high school principal reported one question on a Common Core first-grade math test:

"Take a look at question No. 1, which shows students five pennies, under which it says 'part I know,' and then a full coffee cup labeled with a '6' and, under it, the word 'Whole.' Students are asked to find 'the missing part' from a list of four numbers. My assistant principal for mathematics was not sure what the question was asking. How could pennies be part of a cup?"

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