How Did We Get A Federal Curriculum?

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Behind frequent protestations by public officials about local control of the schools, a federal curriculum has been quietly imposed by law. All the pieces are now in place for this major goal of the Clinton Administration.
Elementary and secondary school education used to be organized around subjects such as reading, math, history, geography, language, and science. While smatterings of those subjects are still taught, the focus has been shifted from academic subject matter to teaching attitudes, beliefs, values, themes, behaviors, and job skills.

This is indoctrination, not education. Leftwing professors write the textbooks and the teachers unions control the public schools, so the ideology is what those groups deem politically correct.

And it's all hiding behind that good conservative word "standards." Who could possibly be against standards?

Two of the three 1994 Bill Clinton laws, Goals 2000 which defines the goals and School-to-Work which prescribes the shift from academics to job skills, were touted as "voluntary." The third 1994 law, the appropriations reauthorization (known to many as H.R. 6), tied the knot, warning that schools would not get any federal money unless they conform to the other two laws.

In a remarkable inclusion of special-interest legislation, the third law named and funded a private organization, the Center for Civic Education (CCE), to develop the national standards for teaching civics and government. This cozy relationship was reconfirmed in the 2002 education law called Leave No Child Behind and means that CCE is empowered, with the force of federal law and a stream of taxpayers' money, to decide what is taught in our nation's schools about civics and government.

CCE produced a 180-page volume called "National Standards for Civics and Government," plus textbooks, teacher's guides and other materials for elementary, middle, and high school levels. This great quantity of words is short on facts but long on inculcating attitudes.

CCE's textbook called "We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution" admits a peculiar aversion to facts: "The primary purpose of this text is not to fill your head with a lot of facts about American history and geography. Knowledge of the facts is important but only insofar as it deepens your understanding of the American Constitutional system and its development."

"Deepens your understanding," that is, of a prescribed worldview without cluttering your mind with hard facts about American history and what's actually in the U.S. Constitution. For example, the fact that the U.S. Constitution contains a Second Amendment doesn't exist in the book called "Standards."

This is curious because, while the federal law was vague about the content of the standards CCE was empowered to write, the law was very specific in demanding instruction on the Bill of Rights. Many pages of "Standards" are devoted to the Bill of Rights but, funny thing, the Second Amendment is completely censored out.

The 180 pages of "Standards," of course, contain much that is informative, but the information is peripheral to the selling of a political agenda designed to change the student rather than educate him. The book admits that "Standards" is trying to teach "certain dispositions or traits of character."

One major theme is a put-down of allegiance to national sovereignty. Professor Allen Quist of Bethany Lutheran College made a word count and discovered that the book contains only 8 references to national sovereignty, but 17 references to the environment, 42 references to diversity, and 42 to multiculturalism.

When "Standards" listed the seven "fundamental values" of the United States, national sovereignty didn't make the cut, but diversity did.

Six of the eight mentions of national sovereignty use the same curious wording: "The world is divided into nation-states that claim sovereignty over a defined territory and jurisdiction over everyone within it."

Do we only "claim" national sovereignty, or is it a historical fact that we won our national sovereignty in a War of Independence and we jolly well need it to protect ourselves against foreign aggressors. The words "divided into" imply that maybe it would be better if we were not "divided" into countries, phrasing that is a favorite of those who advocate global government.

CCE's "Standards" puts two government purposes on equivalent levels: "the protection of the rights of individuals and the promotion of the common good." The words "common good" are repeated over and over again in this book, but they are not in our Constitution.

"The common good" can mean whatever a totalitarian government wants it to mean. Our Founders never would have ranked "common good" as an equal value with our Creator-endowed individual rights.

The last page of "Standards" gives its final advice to the students: Citizens have "the ability to reaffirm or change fundamental constitutional values." Is that what a federal curriculum is all about — changing our constitutional values?