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Rotten to the Core

9/22/2013 11:35:00 AM
By Joan Swirsky -RenewAmerica.com

In July, the state of New York announced the results of its first tests based on the Common Core: The region hasn't been this battered since Superstorm Sandy. Just 26 percent of students in third through eighth grade passed the English exam, and only 30 percent passed the math test. In one Harlem school, just seven percent of students received passing scores in English, and 10 percent in math. We've gone from No Child Left Behind to Well-Just-About-Every-Child-Left-Behind ...progress of a kind. If 'learned helplessness' is the Common Core's goal, it's a stunning success." Businessman George Ball

Indeed, the tests based on the new Common Core (CC) curriculum horrified both parents and educators in New York State, as they are sure to do in the 45 other states that have accepted these new federal-education standards.

Yet in the very definition of a clueless response to the disastrous test results, NY State Education Commissioner John B. King, Jr. said that "these proficiency scores do not reflect a drop in performance, but rather a raising of standards to reflect college and career readiness in the 21st century." Nice try, Mr. King. Go back to sleep.

How did this happen? Here's a little history. When President George W. Bush introduced No Child Left Behind, liberals and teachers' unions went crazy. How dare any program actually measure the effectiveness of classroom teachers or, worse, hold them accountable for decade after decade of failure? How dare that same program document the great number of students allowed to progress through grade after grade in spite of jaw-dropping deficits in math and literacy? Isn't it wrongheaded, critics asked, to 'teach to the test' instead of giving students better skills and deeper knowledge? As if testing skills and knowledge is a bad thing!

Of course the "evolved" progressives and educrats among us decided to contrive a better mousetrap for improving the devolving state of American public-school education and they called their brainchild Common Core, a program that was formally adopted by the federal government in 2010 and by NY State in 2011. Other contributors to this dumbed-down excuse for education included members of the leftist Aspen Institute which was founded in 1950 to, among other things, "define a good society."

Common Core has a nice ring, doesn't it, suggesting that we're all in this together and we all believe in education that includes America's "core" values?

Don't be fooled. As author and journalist Dean Kalahar writes, "Common Core...may look delicious, but before you take a bite out of the apple, it might be a good idea to know a razor is inside."

As Kalahar explains, "President Obama and Education Secretary [Arne] Duncan falsely said the Common Core standards were developed by the states and voluntarily adopted. CC was actually developed by an organization called Achieve, approved by the National Governors Association and funded by the Gates Foundation by at least \$173 million dollars. The [cash-starved] states were bribed by \$4.35 billion 'Race to the Top' dollars if they adopted the standards. Federal laws prohibit the U.S. Department of Education from prescribing any curriculum, but four billion is a big carrot - or is it a stick? Forty-six states and the District of Columbia have sold out... I mean 'signed on.'"

According to journalist Nick Wills, the Common Core curriculum was implemented with virtually no empirical evidence of its value, and it was rushed into school systems without consulting - drum roll here - students, teachers and parents! Education-reformer Diane Ravitch says that the standards have been adopted "without any field test ... imposed on the children of this nation despite the fact that no one has any idea how they will affect students, teachers, or schools."

This takes on a certain grotesque logic when, according to businessman George Ball, you realize that in "the 60-person work group that developed the curriculum, there was not one practicing teacher! David Coleman, chief architect of the Common Core curriculum, now heads the College Board. That's worrisome, and so is Coleman's background as a consultant at McKinsey & Co., the firm that so ably advised Kmart, Enron, Swissair and Global Crossing."

But so irresponsible were our educators and so avaricious to feed at the federal trough that they bought the whole package without even a sneak-peek at its contents.

What did they buy? Kalahar states that "for all intents and purposes, Common Core is nationalized education. History has shown that state-run information control, which begins with education, has always led to disastrous results, [for example] the USSR, Germany, and Cuba.

"The foundational philosophy of Common Core," Kalahar adds, "is to create students ready for social action so

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they can force a social-justice agenda."

According to Wall St. Journal writer David Feith: "Common Core is about an obsession with race, class, gender, and sexuality as the forces of history and political identity...nationalizing education via Common Core is about promoting an agenda of anti-capitalism, sustainability, white guilt, global citizenship, self-esteem, affective math, and culture-sensitive spelling and language. This is done in the name of consciousness raising, moral relativity, fairness, diversity, and multiculturalism."

Again, with zero input from students, teachers and parents - and zero knowledge by any parents about what is going on in their children's classrooms!

For instance, did you know that the people who bleat most loudly about transparency - in this case those in Obama's U.S. Dept. of Education - rewrote federal privacy laws in 2012 allowing the powers-that-be to share your child's academic record with virtually anyone? Now states are starting to combine student test scores, discipline history, medical records, nicknames, religion, political affiliation, addresses, extracurricular activities, fingerprints, iris scans, DNA, blood type, religion, family income, bus stop schedules and psychological evaluations into a private database called inBloom.

"The federal government is acquiring a massive amount of data that can be sold to the highest bidders," says Carole Hornsby Haynes, Ph.D., a curriculum specialist and writer. "This is an invasion of student and family privacy and a violation of our 4th Amendment rights. The education-technology buzzards are circling overhead and, having smelled the strong scent of money, are salivating at the thought of making billions from this new goldmine."

Did the principal of your child's school let you know about this gross - and I believe, unconstitutional - invasion of privacy? Did your child's teacher? Did the superintendent? Did the School Board? No? Is that alone not an indefensible breach of trust and a further reason to reject this insidious Trojan Horse into American education?

Journalist and author Michelle Malkin calls Common Core "the stealthy federal takeover of school curriculum and standards across the country." She explains that for decades, "collectivist agitators in our schools have chipped away at academic excellence in the name of fairness, diversity and social justice. [They] denounced Western civilization requirements, the Founding Fathers and the Great Books as racist. They attacked traditional grammar classes as irrelevant in modern life. They deemed ability grouping of students (tracking) bad for self-esteem. They replaced time-tested rote techniques and standard algorithms with fuzzy math, inventive spelling and multicultural claptrap."

Malkin says that independent members of the expert panel in charge of validating the standards refute the claim that Common Core standards are superior. "Stanford University professor James Milgram, the only mathematician on the validation panel, concluded that the Common Core math scheme would place American students two years behind their peers in other high-achieving countries. In protest, Milgram refused to sign off on the standards. He's not alone." Professor Jonathan Goodman of New York University found that the Common Core math standards imposed "significantly lower expectations with respect to algebra and geometry than the published standards of other countries."

And Ze'ev Wurman, a prominent software architect and longtime math advisory expert in California and Washington, D.C., said that "Common Core marks the cessation of educational standards improvement in the United States. No state has any reason left to aspire for first-rate standards, as all states will be judged by the same mediocre national benchmark enforced by the federal government."

Journalist Cheryl Carpenter Klimek says that, "We've all been taught that $2+1=3$, but under Common Core the answer could be 4, or pretty much any number you want to offer - as long as you can explain how you calculated the problem...." She cites a video of a Chicago teacher, Amanda August, explaining the, ahem, logic of this Common Core policy: "Even if they said, '3 x 4 was 11,' if they were able to explain their reasoning and explain how they came up with their answer really in, umm, words and oral explanation, and they showed it in the picture but they just got the final number wrong, we're really more focusing on the how."

Writer Tabitha Korol has pored over the textbooks used in the CC curriculum. Prentiss Hall's "World History," currently used in Brevard County, Florida, devotes a 72-page chapter to Islam and only small paragraphs about Judaism and Christianity which are embedded in other chapters. Multiple editions of Houghton Mifflin's "Across the Centuries" were found to contain Islamic preaching. And Pearson, the world's leading pre-K-20 educational publishing company, is "dedicated to working with educators to change the way America thinks."

"With whose approval?" Korol asks. Indeed!

In "Contemporary Human Geography 2e," Korol found mention of "the Five Pillars of Islam, the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, but not the values and righteous ethics of the Ten Commandments of Judaism and Christianity. In "Human Geography," Korol found that "two of the topics posed the acceptability of murdering Jews, but for different reasons and judged by different circumstances. The superintendent of schools in one of the districts said he didn't find that offensive..."

"Not only have they removed classes in civics, history, our nation's foundation and traditional values," Korol states, "but they have ensured the erasure by discontinuing cursive writing from the curriculum, the same script used for our original official documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, to make them indecipherable and insignificant. Gone are the studies in economics, needed for creative, entrepreneurial

job opportunities, the country's growth, and the arts, a reflection of the culture. How different is this from the book burning events of Nazism and other conquering tyrannical regimes?

"Further, the students will suffer a 60 percent cut in reading classic literature, poetry and drama, including the works of Charles Dickens, Edith Wharton, and Mark Twain, and the introduction of Algebra-1 and, by extension, advanced math will be delayed. From this information alone, it appears that the next generation is destined to become the drones of a worker society, not the citizens of an exceptional nation."

Korol says that the Common Core textbooks "omit essential data and provide indoctrinating narratives that devalue Israel, Judaism and Christianity in favor of Islam."

For instance, in Albany, New York, a high school English teacher used a Common Core textbook for her students' assignment, which was to watch old Nazi propaganda films and justify to the Kommandant (portrayed by the teacher) why the Jews should be murdered. And a teacher in Brentwood, Tennessee, asked her students if it was acceptable for Palestinians to kill Jewish children, based upon Israel's occupation of "Palestine."

In yet another CC textbook, Korol says, "two spellings are given for the Arab capitals of Mecca and Medina, but Jerusalem, the Jewish capital in Israel for three millennia since the days of David, is absent! Similarly, the text mentions Muslim mosque designs, Christian churches and church architecture, Hindu temples, Buddhist and Shinto Pagodas, and Baha'i Temples, but not one mention of the various Jewish synagogue creations that reflected the architecture of their host cultures over the centuries."

This is the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Korol and Malkin document their findings exhaustively and extensively, as do others who have made it their business to research the astoundingly racist - and of course leftist - curriculum, which is so replete with omissions, mistakes and distortions that it insures a one-size-fits-all population of astounding ignorance and deeply-embedded prejudice. Or, as Will Fitzhugh, publisher of The Concord Review has said: "The Common Core curriculum ...is enabling students to be ignoramuses."

Journalist and author Dr. Ileana Johnson Paugh provides additional examples of the vile indoctrination the Common Core inflicts on students. She cites the development of a first-grade Democracy Plan to help people in need. "Is this what first graders do now, they think about ways to organize people in their communities to fix social problems? This is community organizing; this is communism, not literature and writing."

"In the same series of books," Paugh adds, "educators are directed to teach first graders about emotional words of anger and fear in order to accomplish their social justice goals. The workbook gives the following example. 'My mom ___ (tells) (nags) me to clean my room.' Students are supposed to choose 'nags' because it is an emotional word of anger. If a student chooses 'tells,' the answer is incorrect."

Homework activities, she says, include practicing being upset and angry because "feelings cause people to act."

"Is there any wonder that we have the Occupy Wall Street mobs, angry mobs, flash mobs, and people talking over each other? Liberals are taught to be ruled by feelings and not by logic."

By third grade, Paugh explains, teachers must "measure attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions," noting on the Student Observation Form whether "growth and change in individual student's behavior and attitudes is observed. Does the student use the plural 'we' and 'our' to advocate ways to solve social problems? In other words, I and my, individualism, are frowned upon."

Not incidentally, as a dangerous companion program to Common Core, the American Library Association is now teaching librarians how to push Islam. As part of a National Endowment for the Humanities program funded by \$150 million of our taxpayer dollars, 25 books and a DVD are being provided to 800 public libraries - is your library included? - but no books on Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.

The good news is that all over the country more and more people are becoming aware of the totalitarian nature of the Common Core curriculum and fighting back. Malkin lists grassroots parents groups and Tea Party groups in Massachusetts, Georgia, Utah, Texas, Indiana, Alabama, Florida, Ohio, South Carolina, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and nearly a dozen other states that are now educating themselves and their state legislatures about "the centralized education racket."

In addition, the Indiana state senate passed legislation to halt Common Core implementation and similar legislation is moving through the Alabama state legislature. And a few weeks ago, Governor Rick Scott of Florida held an education summit for education, business and political leaders on Common Core.

Writing of the summit, Laura Rambeau Lee says: "The primary objection is that it is taking the control of our children's education away from the parents, teachers, and local, even state, departments of education."

For instance, she adds, "on a nationwide scale, every teacher in every second grade class will be doing the same assignment on the same day of the same week. Teachers are no longer responsible for lesson plans. They are given the specific assignments and are teaching them to their students. If a student does not understand he or she will be out of luck, because tomorrow it is on to the next assignment. There is no opportunity to help the students who do not 'get it.' They will become frustrated and begin to have behavior problems and hate school. Many parents are already experiencing these problems with their children."

Additionally, "What is the correct answer? All I know is it is not 'B.' Parents will not understand the assignment sufficiently to help their child and the child will begin to believe their teacher knows more than their parents."

Rambeau Lee exhorts every parent to demand to see his or her child's assignments. She says there are anti-Common Core Facebook pages for every state, and links to other education websites on her blog, Right-Reason.com (under the education tab).

David Bloomfield, professor of Education, Law and Policy at Brooklyn College, describes the defensiveness, excuses and rationalizations we've started to hear from the educational establishment this way: "The amount of spin is directly proportional to the size of the screw-up."

But Michelle Malkin sums it up best. Common Core is rotten to the core."

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