

The Common Core death knell for public education

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By Michael Moore

Although the Common Core is not technically a federal program, you couldn't tell from the cheerleading routine orchestrated by President Obama and Arne Duncan.

Who is behind the Common Core? The Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association have been leading the standards development process to promote "consistency" from state to state.

But to sweeten the pot, the federal government made \$4 billion in Race to the Top money available to reward states that adopted the Common Core.

Since anything Obama is an anathema in Georgia, a grassroots organization led by Brunswick State Sen. William Ligon is dead set against the Common Core and is interested in replacing it with another set of Georgia standards.

Sen. Ligon's S.B. 167 removes Georgia as a Common Core state, and S.B. 203 establishes a curriculum content advisory council to rewrite the standards.

At a recent meeting of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, eight state superintendent candidates — one Democrat and seven Republicans — either expressed concern or outright resistance to the Common Core.

The president of Achieve, a research and advocacy group — and major player in the Common Core's development — flew down to the Chamber of Commerce meeting to address their concerns. Why would Achieve go to such lengths?

Other heavy hitters have also lined up in opposition to the Common Core: Pittsburgh media mogul Richard Mellon Scaife, the billionaire Koch brothers, Amway founders Dick and Betsy DeVos, the Heritage Foundation, the CATO Institute, the Heartland Foundation, FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity are among the most vocal opposition.

Opposition to the Common Core based on concerns over quality and/or federal intrusion is bad news for the think tanks and foundations with a lot of money to lose if states start opting out of the Common Core.

With the support of many players like the CCSSO, NGA, the Gates Foundation and a host of wealthy mega-foundations, textbook and testing companies, curriculum planners and colleges of education, maybe we should also ask who stands to benefit?

Will it benefit our children? Common Core was never researched before implementation. So, we really don't know. Instead, follow the money.

General Electric has made a \$18 million commitment to develop and share Common Core instructional resources. State Farm aired its pro-Common Core commercial many times during prime time TV. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation pours money in support of the Common Core. Goldman Sachs contributes to the Partnership for Public Service committed to the Common Core.

Why are these private concerns so interested in public education? All are part of "Big Philanthropy" and are taking advantage of draconian cuts to state education programs by privatizing what states used to provide.

Mega-foundations have virtually unchecked influence on education policy. Think of just the testing and curriculum guides for the Common Core alone and how much money stands to be gained. The use of standardized test scores to assess students and teachers creates a financial bonanza for entities that create these tests, and the entities that prepare and remediate both groups.

Teachers, students, administrators, parents and stakeholders have no role to play — other than as recipients of these reforms.

Common Core is a by-product of the philanthropic-industrial complex that seeks to privatize education so the very wealthy can show that public education is falling apart and their tax monies should go to private schools.

Privatizing education in Georgia has been a goal of the state legislature for years. It looks like we're finally letting them get to what would be the death knell for public education.

The irony is that to accomplish this stealth goal, these supposedly-conservative Republicans who are in charge must relinquish local control, follow Obama's lead and embrace the federalization of education standards, known as the Common Core.