

The News-Herald

La. governor's lawsuit is more illogic about Common Core standards

By Craig Farrand
August 31, 2014

"It's about politics; it's not about education."

— Arne Duncan, U.S. Education Secretary

Criticizing Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal's opposition to Common Core

Hello Downriver,

Please explain this to me.

Twenty-five years ago, the nation's states began writing standards outlining what students should know at each grade level.

It was part of a growing movement to get our schools working again.

By the mid-1900s, the nation's governors and business leaders — at their National Education Summit — founded Achieve Inc., with its core goal being that "all students should graduate from high school ready for college, careers and citizenship."

Who runs Achieve?

Its chairman is Craig Barrett, former CEO of Intel Corp.

On the board are Mark Grier, vice chairman of Prudential Financial; Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam; Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon; and Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick.

Chairman Emeritus of the board is Louis Gerstner Jr., former CEO and chairman of the board of IBM.

Why did I list these names?

Read on.

Following up a decade later, in 2009 the National Governors Association appointed a group to develop standards that would meet that stated goal.

The group included David Coleman, president of the College Board, which is best known for designing the SAT college exam and the Advanced Placement test.

Also in the group were William McCallum of the University of Arizona and Phil Daro of the University of California.

The group's efforts were underwritten by the governors and a cross section of Corporate America, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Pearson Publishing Co. and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, among others.

The result of their work was the Common Core Standards for math and English language arts.

The purpose of the standards, the group wrote, was to “provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them.”

Plus, “the standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.”

In short, the plan was to clarify what was needed to ensure that graduating students were prepared to go to college or get a job.

This is important — because of what it DOESN'T say.

You see, Common Core only establishes what a student should know — not how they should be taught to know it.

It doesn't dictate textbooks, curricula, teaching methods or any other tools.

It only says that by grade X, a student should know and/or be able to do Y.

Keep in mind now that the standards were requested by our nation's governors and business leaders.

In the end, 44 states and the District of Columbia adopted the standards — including Michigan — and began implementing their own unique methods for meeting the criteria.

Each state came up with its own curricula, books, methods and tests.

Five states didn't adopt the standards at the state level and one adopted the English standards, but not the math standards.

And since their adoption, five states reversed themselves and repealed or replaced the initiative.

Why?

I have no logical, reasoned idea.

I do know, however, that opposition to the Common Core standards started with twisted reasoning and no logic.

For example, the Brookings Institute questioned whether Common Core would have any effect; that “they have done little to equalize academic achievement within states.”

The problem, of course, is that Common Core isn’t even in place yet — so how would anyone know if it works or not?

Dumb, blind reaction.

Then the Cato Institute said it’s “not the least bit paranoid to say the federal government wants a national curriculum.”

Even though:

1. Common Core specifically and deliberately DOESN’T specify curriculum.
2. The federal government didn’t create Common Core.

Of course, such truths don’t stand in the way of the alternate reality in which too many politicians reside:

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said her state should not “relinquish control of education to the federal government, neither should we cede it to the consensus of other states.”

Even though her state had a seat at the national table and took part in the discussions 25 years ago.

Others came in to attack from another perspective, upset that Common Core doesn’t do enough.

But now we have Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal filing a lawsuit this past Wednesday against the Obama administration over Common Core.

His complaint?

According to published reports, Jindal is accusing the president of illegally manipulating federal grant money and regulations to force states to adopt the Common Core education standards.

Well, I’m glad somebody is.

Because if we don't get rid of the patchwork concept of what passes for education in this country — and replace it with a uniform level of student expectations, God help us all.

As it is, too many of our children are doomed to cycles of poverty because they were born into a failed school system.

Which means that the rest of their lives are a drain on our society, instead of a resource.

The solution is to give all our children — regardless of where they're born and live — the best possible chance to succeed.

Which means Common Core is the right idea — and these irrational, illogical nutcases need to shut up and let others learn a quality of intelligence that clearly is beyond their own understanding.

In 100 words or less: Florida is either a fraud or a mirage.

It entices retirees from northern climes to spend their senior years — and money — soaking up its sun and fun.

But what the chamber of commerce ads fail to mention is that eventually those retirees are going to become seriously ill and homebound.

Which means stuck inside air-conditioned homes, unable to spend even moments in the heat and humidity — and hundreds, if not thousands, of miles from their families.

And as their friends and neighbors die, they become more isolated than ever.

Having just returned, I don't ever want to go back.

Ever.