

# Ed is Watching

[Anti-National Curriculum Manifesto Worth Signing in \(Virtual\) Ink, Not Crayon](#)

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If you gave me a big box of crayons and asked me to write a manifesto, it's probably not what I would have come up with. But I am glad to give it a big thumbs up, and hope that lots of big people sign on. What am I talking about? [Closing the Door on Innovation: Why One National Curriculum is Bad for America:](#)

We, the undersigned, representing viewpoints from across the political and educational spectrum, oppose the call for a nationalized curriculum in the Albert Shanker Institute Manifesto "A Call for Common Content." We also oppose the ongoing effort by the U.S. Department of Education to have two federally funded testing consortia develop national curriculum guidelines, national curriculum models, national instructional materials, and national assessments using Common Core's national standards as a basis for these efforts.

We agree that our expectations should be high and similar for all children whether they live in Mississippi or Massachusetts, Tennessee or Texas. We also think that curricula should be designed before assessments are developed, not the other way around.

But we do not agree that a one-size-fits-all, centrally controlled curriculum for every K-12 subject makes sense for this country or for any other sizable country....

As one of the key manifesto organizers, Dr. Jay Greene sums it up well in his notice at *Education Next*: ["Centralization of education is bad for everyone except the central planners."](#) Another co-organizer, Dr. Greg Forster, gives the background and makes a strong case for the manifesto in [an article for the Witherspoon Institute](#). A third co-organizer, former Assistant Secretary of Education Bill Evers, in a piece for *The Hill*, brings home the legal point that [the curriculum proposal is an overreach of federal power](#).

*Education Week* blogger Catherine Gewertz [takes note of the "counter-manifesto,"](#) and observes that the original Shanker Manifesto "has more than 200 signatories." Gewertz earlier reported that Minnesota and South Carolina [have joined New Hampshire and Texas](#) as states considering legislative proposals to withdraw from some or all of the national Common Core standards initiative.

Yet it's my own home state of Colorado that appears to have among the most ["Closing the Door on Innovation" signatories](#) — including State Board of Education chair Bob Schaffer, vice-chair Marcia Neal, and member Paul Lundeen; state senator Keith King; Centennial Institute fellow (and Independence Institute senior fellow) Krista Kafer; and my [Education Policy Center](#) friends Pam Benigno and Ben DeGrow (so they tell me, their names haven't shown up yet on the list).

A longtime outspoken voice against the Common Core standards, the Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey lauds the "counter-manifesto" effort and makes the case for a key antidote, namely that ["\[school\] choice is essential \*right now\*."](#) Hard to argue with that. When it comes to education and learning, more power to parents and less to the federal government.

AEI education guru Rick Hess says [now the Common Core debate gets interesting](#). Still, "Closing the Door on Innovation" is a manifesto worth signing in ink — or the electronic equivalent thereof — not crayon, as colorful as that might be. That being the case, a leading question is how long will it take before this manifesto gets more signatories than the one from the Shanker Institute?