



Jeb Bush Retrofits Facts of Common Core To Boost Conservative Credibility

By Dr. Susan Berry

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During his latest [trip to Iowa](#), Jeb Bush worked to drum up support for a potential run for president. His struggle to win over the conservative grassroots of the GOP, however, was shown yet again in an [op-ed](#) in the *Washington Post*, in which he attempted to turn both the Common Core standards initiative and a potential reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) into strongholds of federalism.

“Given all the challenges facing education reform, we need to remember who really should make the decisions about what happens in our schools: state and local authorities and, most important, parents,” writes Bush.

A bit later he adds:

The federal government’s role in elementary and secondary education should be limited: It should work to create transparency so that parents can see how their local schools measure up; it should support policies that have a proven record; and it should make sure states can’t ignore students who need extra help.

How does a parent who has been working to fight the federally driven Common Core standards – which Bush has championed for the past five years – read these words?

“Jeb Bush’s piece in the *Washington Post* was really quite bizarre and an indicator of the fact that even *he* now realizes that his pro-Common Core stance will most definitely cost him the Republican nomination,” Heather Crossin, Indiana parent organizer of Hoosiers Against Common Core, tells Breitbart News. “It’s a sign of desperation that the bulk of the article is an

attempt to convince the reader that he actually believes in such things as local control of our schools, states' rights, and parents as the ultimate decision makers of their children's education." Bush's attempt to infuse his views on education reform with a dose of federalism in order to salvage his credibility with the conservative base seems obvious.

The former Florida governor is pushing for the reauthorization of NCLB, the latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), first enacted by Lyndon Baines Johnson as part of his "War on Poverty." Bush describes ESEA as a "critical piece of legislation that sets out the role of the federal government in school funding and policy."

Conservatives, of course, would like to see no role for the federal government in education, as per the Constitution.

"[T]he Obama administration has issued a patchwork of waivers and side deals, given out by fiat and without consistency," Bush continues. "No wonder parents and state and local leaders question Washington's motives when it comes to our schools."

The "patchwork of waivers" is all part of the incentivization program of the Common Core initiative, which Bush has supported wholeheartedly and urged states to adopt. States could obtain flexibility waivers from the federal government's NCLB law if they adopted the set of "common" and "uniform" standards.

As for his statement that the "federal government's role in elementary and secondary education should be limited," Bush is late on the scene with that concept, since the Common Core project already involves federally-funded consortia creating tests aligned with the controversial standards. In addition, states were invited to submit applications for federal grant money from Obama's 2009 stimulus bill (Race to the Top) if they agreed to adopt the standards, and, Obama took credit for Common Core in State of the Union addresses.

"It's as if he hopes the reader will forget that his beloved Common Core is the antithesis of these concepts," Crossin observes about Bush.

In support of his idea that "the federal role should be subservient to the role of states," Bush points to examples of state-led progress.

"Massachusetts passed a reform bill on standards, accountability and choice in 1993 and became the nation's top academic achiever," he writes. Ironically, however, the Bay State became the

nation's top academic achiever with standards that were replaced by the federally driven Common Core in 2010, a situation that still strikes Common Core opponents as completely lacking in common sense as well.

Neal McCluskey, associate director of Cato's [Center for Educational Freedom](#), notes Bush's shift in tone.

"Perhaps because of all the heat he is taking over the federally-driven Common Core, Gov. Bush sounds like he wants state, local, and parental control of education. And maybe he does," McCluskey told Breitbart News. He adds:

But looking at the role he lays out for Washington shows how unfettered he would actually have the feds be. Saying, among other things, that Washington should support "policies that have a proven record" opens the door to limitless meddling and control. All someone in Washington has to say is they think their favorite policy has a record they think is proven and – voila! – Washington can force all schools to obey it. And where, by the way, does the Constitution authorize such federal policymaking? Nowhere.

Gov. Bush follows his list of justifications for federal power with the assertion that "we are long overdue in setting the lines of authority so clearly." But not only is his list almost impenetrably murky rather than clear, the lines of authority are already set by the Constitution: the Feds have none in education.

In another ironic twist, as an example of state and local control that "can work," Bush writes, "We've seen [more than 40 states voluntarily work together to create](#) the Common Core standards for language arts and math. I support such rigorous, state-driven academic standards."

Like many Common Core proponents, Bush continues to refer to the standards as "rigorous," and "state-driven" or "state-led." [No independent studies](#) have been performed to validate the claims that the Common Core is more "rigorous" or "higher" than other standards.

In addition, two main private organizations – the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers – created the standards and still own their copyright. The project was privately funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. While Bush justifies federal involvement in education so that states can be accountable, none of these private groups are accountable to parents, teachers, students, or taxpayers.

Bush urges the passage of the ESEA reauthorization based on a notion that it's as close to federalism as we can get.

However, Lindsey Burke at the [Heritage Foundation](#) – which opposes both the House and Senate reauthorization proposals – explains that the measures “fail to adequately reduce federal intervention in education, and as such, represent a missed opportunity for advancing conservative principles.”

She adds:

The current reauthorization proposals in Congress largely punt on any effort to eliminate programs or cut spending. Through the decades and various reauthorizations of the ESEA, dozens of competitive grant programs have accumulated. In fact, some 80 programs are authorized under NCLB today, more than 60 of which are niche competitive grant programs.

These programs create a significant compliance burden for state and local leaders, who must apply for program funding, monitor federal notices and regulations, and demonstrate compliance to the U.S. Department of Education. They also represent one of the primary ways in which Washington has extended its overreach into local school policy.

Burke joined researchers Williamson “Bill” Evers of Stanford University’s Hoover Institution and a former U.S. assistant secretary of education; Theodor Rebarber, CEO of AccountabilityWorks; Sandra Stotsky, professor emerita at University of Arkansas; and Ze’ev Wurman, former senior policy adviser with the U.S. Department of Education, in [a statement](#) asserting their concerns with the ESEA reauthorization drafts.

“The current drafts, both the Senate and the House versions, do not return authority to the states and localities or empower parents,” the authors write. “The ESEA has evolved from what was described at the outset in 1965 as a measure to help children from low-income families into an instrument of testing mandates and federal control of public K-12 education and, increasingly, of private education as well.”

Crossin agrees.

“Jeb Bush banks on parents not realizing that Sen. Alexander’s bill or Rep. Rokita’s [HR5](#), would seriously exacerbate the gross federal intrusion into American schools that already exists,” she observes. “Bush is naive on this front, a day late, and a dollar short. Neither his most recent op-ed nor any other will clear him from the Common Core brand across his forehead.”