



Heritage Foundation report addresses Common Core

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How does one tie together the motives of a student, a teacher, a parent and a politician to produce national education standards?

This is one of several questions that the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, seeks to answer in its latest report, entitled “Common Core and the Centralization of American Education.”

Written by six academics, including Neal McCluskey from the Cato Institute, Stanley Kurtz at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and Williamson Evers at the Hoover Institution, the study, published last week, is a collection of essays adapted from lectures delivered at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation in the fall of 2014.

Each surmise that the American education system will not best succeed under a centralized system. “Stop a federal bureaucrat, a school teacher, and a parent on the street and you will likely hear three different observations about what education can, and should, do,” wrote Heritage Foundation fellow Lindsey Burke in the study’s introduction.

“The federal bureaucrat may respond in terms of what education should accomplish for the nation; the teacher might filter her response through the lens of her classroom; and the parent, naturally, will think in aspirational terms of what she hopes education can do for her child.”

She continues:

“Considering these differing perspectives on the purpose of education provides insight into why opposition to Common Core has been strongest among parents and why national organizations and governors — responding to federal incentives to stick with the national standards and tests — have been slower to reverse course or even reconsider.”

Massachusetts was one of the first states to adopt the Common Core standards, which were developed by the National Governors Association in order to improve math and literacy in the classroom and have been adopted by a number of states.

In years following the adoption of the standards in Massachusetts, some parents and teachers have become concerned that achievement levels in the Commonwealth have declined.

Those opposed to the new standards believe that Common Core de-emphasizes classical literature and the traditional approach to mathematics, while those in favor say that the standards will equalize schools nationwide and help pupils prepare to compete globally.