



Politico: Common Core ‘Won the War’

Politico has issued a notice to GOP 2016 contenders: “Common Core has won the war.”

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“[T]he standards that naysayers love to call ‘Obamacore’ have become the reality on the ground for roughly 40 million students – or about four out of every five public school kids,” writes Kimberly Hefling, as she warns Common Core opponents Donald Trump and Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), “[I]t’s too late.”

She continues:

The math and English standards designed to develop critical thinking have been guiding classrooms for years now, even as the political fight rages on in statehouses and on the campaign trail: Many of today’s textbooks, workbooks, software and tests are designed to teach the oft-bashed academic standards and measure whether students are meeting them. The federal Education Department gave them a big boost but never required them, nor can it.

In more than half of all states, millions of students took new standardized tests last spring based on the standards, and the expected uproar over these test scores hasn’t materialized. The conspiracy theories that Common Core would require monitoring kids via iris scans, force teachers to use porn to help students learn to read or ban teaching cursive have largely quieted.

Hefling quotes Melinda Gates, whose husband Bill and their foundation have spent possibly billions of private funding—to add to federal funding—to promote and implement the Common Core initiative: “The few states that have rolled it back, when you look at what they’ve actually done, the standards they are using are 95 percent the Core standards. It’s what we know needs to be taught,” Melinda Gates said.

Ironically, in making her judgment about the success of the Common Core, Hefling appears to have dismissed the opinions of actual human beings—such as parents and teachers.

The writer makes her pronouncement as the popularity of the Common Core initiative has plummeted throughout the nation since 45 states rather abruptly signed onto it to get a quick influx of federal cash.

The annual *Education Next* poll on school reform recently found that national support for Common Core has continued its descent from 65 percent in 2013, to 53 percent in 2014, and now to 49 percent this year. Additionally, the annual PDK/Gallup poll found that 54 percent of respondents opposed teachers' use of the Common Core standards in America's classrooms. GOP presidential contender Gov. Mike Huckabee referred to the Common Core label as "toxic," and his rival, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush—though a champion of the nationalized education reform—recently said the phrase "Common Core" is "poisonous," likely because he realizes his support has contributed to his demise as a presidential candidate.

Former Bush administration education policy adviser Ze'ev Wurman wrote recently that Common Core is "dead," while Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey, in reviewing new poll numbers, described the education reform as "crashing." Similarly, the *Boston Globe* acknowledged last month that the federally-funded Common Core test consortium known as PARCC—with numerous states exiting—is in a "death spiral." Hefling slams McCluskey for what she calls his "ongoing assault on the Obama administration using billions of dollars in incentives to nudge states to adopt the standards."

On Monday, McCluskey noted the outdated tone of Hefling's piece. "It is a headline that would have been accurate several years ago, but today's headline should be somewhat different: 'Common Core in major – but quiet – retreat,'" he corrects.

McCluskey acknowledges that six years ago the public-private partnership of the Obama administration joined with the Gates Foundation and Common Core "architect" David Coleman and his colleagues to achieve a "silent coup." Once parents and teachers became aware of the takeover, however, "something happened."

He observes:

Around 2011 the public suddenly became cognizant that they'd lost a war they weren't even aware they were in. After the states had done their part in conforming to the new standards overlords, districts and schools were told, "implement this new set of standards you've never heard of." That's when the resistance began, and it quickly grew fierce. Indeed, the Core has been on the defensive ever since...

Capturing how bad things are for the Core, a question in a brand new poll that blatantly spins for the Core, describing it as a "set of *high-quality* [italics added] academic standards," elicited only 44 percent support, with only 9 percent saying the standards "are working in their current form and should not be changed."

Perhaps the most important item Common Core has brought to the party—as McCluskey notes—is the fact that more Americans are now aware of how the U.S. Department of Education has grown way beyond its bounds. Americans have rediscovered the word “federalism,” and many more—as represented in the fight for control in the U.S. House—want education policy returned to the states—where the U.S. Constitution says it belongs.

In fact, three GOP 2016 contenders—Carly Fiorina, Ted Cruz, and Rick Santorum—addressed attendees at American Principles Project’s (APP) second annual forum on federalism a little over a week ago. In his address to introduce the forum, Emmett McGroarty, education director for APP, observed:

Federalism... serves as a bulwark for individual liberty.

Elitists, though, have been of the view that the federal government needs vastly more power. And so they have worked to shift power away from the people and to the federal government, and that has been done to the point of dysfunction.

Today, we are going to discuss some of the ways in which power has been shifted to the benefit of special interests and to the detriment of the people. We will hear about what has happened to some basic elements of civic society... includ[ing] education policy, which is something that people across the political spectrum believe should not be a matter of federal control. Yet, the federal government has pushed national academic standards and tests into classrooms across the country... standards of poor quality that lock children into an inferior education.

Perhaps the Common Core initiative has served as one of the many wake-up calls to Americans, and they are responding.

“States are taking apart the Core largely by taking apart the tests, and the Core is in retreat,” observes McCluskey.