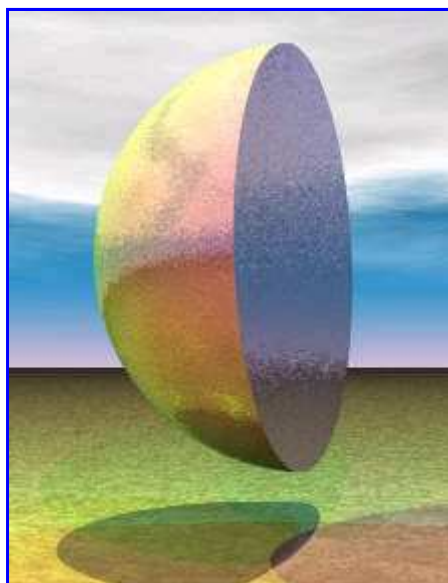


# Jay P. Greene's Blog

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## Hemisphere Fallacy Sighting



(Guest post by Greg Forster)

In a new Flypaper [post](#), Checker and Mike argue that the ~~federal government takeover of schools~~ implementation of common standards can follow one of three paths:

1. **“Let’s Become More Like France.”** Here, we picture a powerful governing board—probably via a new compact among participating states—to oversee the standards, assessments, and many aspects of implementation, validation, and more.
2. **“Don’t Rock the Boat.”** We keep the Common Core footprint as small as possible. An existing group is charged with updating the standards when the time comes, but everything else stays with states, districts, and the market.
3. **“One Foot before the Other.”** This middle ground foresees an interim coordinating body that promotes information sharing, capacity building, and joint-venturing among participating states. By the time the Common Core needs revising, this interim body may evolve into something more permanent or may recommend a long-term governance plan.

In other words, our options are:

1. Too big, strong, and heavy handed.
2. Too weak, limited and complacent.
3. Just right!

Guess which one they favor. No hints!

JPGb readers will recognize [Fordham's longstanding addiction to the hemisphere fallacy](#) – making themselves look good by oversimplifying the landscape into two extreme errors held by the extreme extremists on either side of them, and the reasonable middle ground occupied by reasonable middle grounders like themselves.

Some people say the earth is flat and others say it's round, so the reasonable middle ground is to say it's a hemisphere.

Personally, I'd rephrase those three Fordham options as follows:

1. So big and bold that the federal government takeover of schools becomes obvious, provoking an inevitable backlash from Americans who have repeatedly made it clear they don't want any such thing.
2. So weak and limited that the federal government won't actually be able to take over the schools.
3. Just strong enough to hand all schools over to federal control, but not so strong that the handover becomes obvious.

While we're on the subject, Neal McCluskey [notices](#) something interesting in the new Fordham report:

All that said, there is one, small part of the report that I find quite satisfying. A few months ago, Fordham President Chester Finn called people like me and Jay Greene “[paranoid](#)” for arguing that national standards would be hollowed out by politics. Well, in the report, while it is not explicitly identified as such, you will find what I am going to take as an apology (not to mention a welcome admission):

How will this Common Core effort be *governed* over the long term?...This issue might seem esoteric, almost philosophical in light of the staggering amount of work to be done right now to make the standards real and the assessments viable. But we find it essential—not just for the long-term health of the enterprise, but also to allay immediate concerns that these standards might be co-opted by any of the many factions that want to impose their dubious ideas on American education. *You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to worry about this possibility* [italics added]...

No, you don't.

I'm not sure I would take it as an apology. If Checker wanted to apologize, he would. But he hasn't.

Which leads me to wonder why he's suddenly so anxious to make sure there's something out there in print that shows him expressing exactly the same doubts we do. Something he could point to later, perhaps?

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