



CPAC Experts Dismantle Common Core Myths

By B. Christopher Agee

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Emmett McGroarty, director of American Principles Project Education, joined the Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey to inform CPAC attendees of the numerous misrepresentations supporters of federally imposed curriculum standards often use to defend Common Core.

McCluskey began by attacking the myth that the increasingly unpopular education program consists merely of a set of guidelines.

Instead, he said, Common Core exists to provide a structured curriculum “in math and English and with a connection to science and social studies and is connected to federally funded tests ... on which schools and districts are held accountable.”

Next, he countered the assertion by some that “states voluntarily adopted the Common Core.”

He equated such an argument to a robbery victim whose mugger said he could have his wallet back if he'd give over the keys to his car. By the left's reasoning, he said, it could be said that the victim voluntarily gave up his vehicle.

“If you wanted part of the \$3.45 billion for ‘Race for the Top,’” he said, “you had to, among other things, adopt Common Core.”

For those states requesting a waiver, only two options were available: adopt Common Core or a similar state-produced curriculum.

McGroarty weighed in by noting that it has largely been concerned parents who have noticed the many red flags raised through the implementation of Common Core.

“Parents are looking at what's coming home in their kids' backpacks and they're appalled,” he said.

Among the program's shortcomings, he asserted, is the fact that students learn “fuzzy math” in elementary school and are not exposed to higher levels of math upon reaching high school.

“By eighth grade,” he said, “... a student on Common Core is about one or two years behind their peers in high-performing countries.”

This leaves students unprepared for higher education, McGroarty said, prompting dissenting voices to demand more local input into the curriculum standards.

McCluskey identified the “grassroots, parent-driven revolt against the Common Core” that grew out of states being pressured to sign away their constitutionally protected rights in exchange for federal dollars.

“All this happened during the Great Recession,” he explained, noting that it “wasn’t until this hit districts in 2011 and 2012 that suddenly the public became aware that this strange curriculum was being imposed on their schools.”

He offered a course of action states can take to reverse this federal intrusion into the education system, though he acknowledged that an “outright repeal” of Common Core can be problematic due to the investments they have already made in the program. Instead, he encouraged state leaders to firmly oppose the associated testing.

“If you can get out of the tests,” he said, “. . . you can begin to reclaim control of your state’s educational system.”