



College-Level Writing Teacher Urges Bill Gates to ‘Please, Please’ Stay Away from Higher Ed

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An editor, consultant, and teacher of college-level writing is urging Common Core financier Bill Gates to “please, please” stay away from attempting to wield influence in the world of higher education, especially after what is now recognized as the disastrous effects of the Common Core reform on American K-12 education.

“I would like to take a moment to speak directly to Bill and Melinda Gates,” wrote John Warner at *Inside Higher Ed*. “Please, please, please, please, pretty please don’t do this. I am certain you mean well, but honestly, please just stay away from education. You’ve done enough already.”

Warner is referring to Gates’ creation of a Postsecondary Value Commission, which seeks to “examine what we are learning about the value of postsecondary education and offer recommendations about how to define and measure that value.”

The commission’s website states:

Equity is at the center of the commission’s work. It is essential to understand whether and how colleges and universities create value for all students, especially low-income students and students of color, who experience greater challenges achieving certificates and degrees and realizing their economic benefits.

Additionally, Bill and Melinda Gates have launched the Gates Policy Initiative, which will serve as a lobbying group to achieve legislative outcomes based on the couple’s values.

A report at the *Hill* Gates’ lobbying group will promote its founder’s premier values of “global health, global development, U.S. education and outcomes for black, Latino and rural students specifically, and efforts to move people from poverty to employment.”

Rob Nabors, former White House director of legislative affairs under former President Barack Obama, is also a director at the Gates Foundation and will serve as the executive director of the Gates Policy Initiative.

“Bill and Melinda have a long history of engaging the executive branch, the legislative branch, in a bipartisan way, I don’t see that changing,” Nabors said. “In terms of political giving or

statements in support of political candidates, Bill and Melinda have been very clear that we will not be doing that type of activity through the (c)(4). We are focused almost exclusively on legislative outcomes and the lobbying effort.”

Once again, Gates wants to influence public policy, this time on higher education decisions – a move that comes as Congress begins to consider reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the federal law that centers on financial aid for college students.

A significant problem, as Warner sees it, is that Bill Gates has already failed in his attempt to transform K-12 education.

“His ideas backed by his wealth have had a tremendous, largely deleterious effect on our systems and schools,” he explains, adding Americans should also “not forget the most recent news of the ‘bust’ of Gates’ efforts to improve teaching, in which his foundation invested \$215 million, but put the public on the hook for an additional \$300 million-plus.”

Warner’s fears of Gates’ manipulation of yet another aspect of American education run deep.

In April, results of a preliminary federally-funded study revealed that, one decade since most states adopted Common Core, those that significantly altered their K-12 standards and adopted the Common Core did not outperform other states on the federal tests known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction and Learning (C-SAIL) study found that, by 2017, Common Core appeared to have led to drops in the reading performance of fourth-graders and the math scores of eighth-graders.

“It’s rather unexpected,” said researcher Mengli Song of American Institutes for Research, according to Chalkbeat. “The magnitude of the negative effects tend[s] to increase over time. That’s a little troubling.”

Lance Izumi, senior director of the Center for Education at the Pacific Research Institute, wrote at the Daily Caller, however, that “actually, it’s extremely troubling.”

The new study showed that Gates’ prediction that Common Core “will improve education for millions of students” not only failed to come about, but also that the level of student achievement actually decreased, Izumi said.

“Common Core has turned out to be an expensive disaster for America, with billions of tax dollars wasted on incentives for states to adopt the national standards, on developing and implementing new Common Core-aligned tests, and on ineffective curricula,” he stressed.

The Common Core State Standards is a federally-promoted education initiative introduced in the Obama administration’s 2009 stimulus bill through a competitive grant program called Race to the Top (RTTT).

States could apply and compete for federal grant money as long as they adopted a set of uniform standards, assessments aligned with them, student data collection systems, and teacher evaluations based on student performance on the assessments.

Ultimately, 45 state boards of education adopted the Common Core standards, which were developed by three private organizations in Washington, DC: the National Governors

Association (NGA), the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and Achieve Inc. All three organizations were privately funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and none of these groups are accountable to parents, teachers, students, or taxpayers.

By 2016, the annual *Education Next* poll, surveying over 4,000 adults, showed public support for Common Core had fallen to a record low.

According to the survey, support for the reform dropped to 50 percent that year, down from 58 percent in 2015 and from 83 percent in 2013.

The poll also found that, among teachers, support for the program had dropped from 87 percent in 2013, to 54 percent in 2014, to 44 percent in 2015, and continuing at that level in 2016.

Teachers' unions ultimately pushed to eliminate the requirement that teacher evaluations be based, in part, on their students' performance on the Common Core-aligned tests.

Also, in 2016, a report by ACT— the nonprofit that developed the college admissions and placement test that is administered to more than a million high school graduates annually — found college professors and employers voicing concern that Common Core failed in its primary goal: to prepare students for college and careers.

ACT found that only 16 percent of college professors said their incoming students were well prepared overall for college-level work, down from 26 percent in 2009 and 2012.

Ze'ev Wurman, a former senior policy advisor with the George W. Bush U.S. Department of Education, had already observed at Breitbart News in March 2015, the claims of Common Core's "rigorous" high quality were simply "not valid":

Common Core standards were never validated before being published, and every serious piece of research that has analyzed them since found them lacking. Much of the Common Core is experimental and a rehash of the failed 1989 NCTM standards that brought America to its knees in mathematical achievement. Parents are justified in their complaints about the strange and meaningless homework their children are bringing home, and they should distrust educators who uncritically praise them. More likely than not, those educators themselves have little experience and have been sold a bill of goods by Common Core's Washington, D.C. promoters.

In the fall of 2018, Ted Rebarber of AccountabilityWorks co-authored a Pioneer Institute study with Cato Institute's Neal McCluskey that found Common Core had not only damaged public-school education as demonstrated by sharp drops in academic performance, but also had obstructed school choice.

Additionally, those students who were already performing poorly prior to Common Core — many of them minority students — declined even further, an outcome that undercut one of the stated primary goals of the Core: to close the achievement gap and attain "equity" — the same goal at the center of Gates' new commission for higher education.

Rebarber referred to Common Core as the "worst large-scale educational failure in 40 years."

And the Federalist's Joy Pullmann, author of *The Education Invasion: How Common Core Fights Parents for Control of American Kids*, recalled the tremendous costs of Common Core in the United States.

“Dozens of people who created and pushed Common Core are laughing all the way to the bank, having cashed in their positions on the project for massive resumes and salaries,” she wrote.

“Dozens, if not hundreds, of vocal Common Core aiders and abettors hold positions of power throughout state education agencies, the U.S. Department of Education, education media and foundations, and teachers’ colleges nationwide.”

“Is anyone ever going to drain this swamp?” Pullmann got to the heart of the matter.

As for Warner, a teacher of writing, he notes that, on their own, the Common Core standards “seem commonsense and innocuous, but they ignore the most important part of learning to write: the process by which the writing is produced.”

“Focusing on the standards that describe the outcome of the writing process is ass-backwards to what we should be doing,” he asserts, echoing the sentiment of many American parents who labored helping their children with Common Core math problems.

As Gates moves to his next conquest, this time in higher education, Warner urges Americans to reflect on the significant damage that has been done by reforms such as Common Core, and not allow him to once again “speak for millions of us concerned with education.”

“[H]e can’t be allowed to be the only person with a megaphone,” Warner insists. “This is the power of democracy, and my hope is that we reject the inherently undemocratic forays of people [like] Bill Gates into education, no matter how well-meaning or nice he seems to be.”