



Parents Have Been Right All Along About Common Core -- Officials Should Listen

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The enormous problems with Common Core Standards (CCSS) and accompanying tests have been obvious to parents and citizens groups since they first were imposed by states succumbing to federal bribery/coercion in 2010. Voluminous evidence continues to confirm those perceptive beliefs.

Parents, along with many experts, saw the academic inferiority of CCSS immediately. Parents have been in the forefront of protesting the destruction of math education during the Common Core era. Not teaching standard algorithms, marking correct answers wrong because the student didn't use Common Core methods, and developmentally inappropriate standards have made it impossible for parents, even engineers and professors, to help their children with math homework. The resulting distress has led to a mass exodus of both students and teachers from public schools.

In English, vocabulary-rich classical literature that both teaches students how to write well and important principles of Western Civilization has been replaced by dull technical manuals or psychologically manipulative texts. Snippets of classics are taught without context.

Data is vindicating these parental concerns in spades. Jane Robbins of the American Principles Project described a new Pioneer Institute study by Ted Rebarber of AccountabilityWorks and Neal McCluskey of the Cato Institute, "Common Core, School Choice and Rethinking Standards-Based Reform," that explains "how Common Core has not only damaged public education but also threatened the independence of private schools. How? By imposing government strings on the curricular autonomy of the schools that accept government funding via school-choice mechanisms such as vouchers. Rebarber called Common Core 'the worst large-scale educational failure in forty years.'"

Undergirding that statement are the 2017 NAEP national results in math, which showed stagnation after declining for the first time in 25 years in 2015. Although Florida showed some improvement in math in 2017, Florida's state test vendor (American Institutes for Research) also performs "test development, psychometric analysis [and] validity studies" for the NAEP. So it is quite possible that Florida's improvement has nothing to do with academic achievement, but with how its tests are written and validated.

2018 ACT results also confirm the CCSS slide. The national average composite score was down one full point from 2017 to 2018, with declines in English, math, reading and science. The

percentage of 2018 graduates meeting none of the ACT college readiness benchmarks rose from 31% to 35%. Florida's 2018 average ACT composite score is nearly one full point below the national average and basically the same as last year's score, with readiness benchmarks below the national average and stagnant since 2014.

The ACT and NAEP also show that CCSS is harming struggling students. Achievement gaps that were improving before CCSS are starting to widen again in Florida, and elsewhere. State test results for charter schools, which generally teach Common Core, show the same or increased percentages of D or F schools as the public schools teaching more struggling students with which they compete. These results confirm that CCSS has failed to produce promised celestial levels of improved college readiness and that "choice" programs, especially if CCSS are imposed, are likely not the promised silver bullet either.

Parents have also long understood data privacy problems caused by CCSS. Legislators and the press mocked grassroots groups for concern that CCSS opened the door to Orwellian computer-based training, using devices that measure children's heart rates and other physiological responses to computer lessons. But a 2013 federal report touted such "innovations" and linked them to CCSS. Education technology companies brag about collecting millions of data points per student per day – using these same science-fiction devices -- yet policymakers ignore concerns and carry on. But parental privacy concerns were vindicated earlier this year when the FBI issued a public service announcement regarding education technology data privacy dangers.

Finally, parents have long understood CCSS introduces opportunities for indoctrination. Despite being mocked with "pants on fire" ratings from the press and ignored by legislators, they have been vindicated again. Richard Hess and Grant Addison of the American Enterprise Institute confirmed in National Review that teaching CCSS English and math lessons has taken a hard-left turn, reporting on at least one CCSS curriculum that slathers its Common Core [teacher] workshops with race-based rancor and junk science."

They also say, "Once upon a time, Common Core critics were roundly mocked for fearing that the reading and math standards would somehow serve to promote sweeping ideological agendas; today, [these curriculum developers] are doing their best to vindicate those concerns."

Florida has suffered as a laboratory for CCSS and test-based accountability reforms for 20 years. Channeling Freedom Caucus principles, Governor-elect Ron DeSantis won the primary by twenty points partly due to his promise to "get rid of" Common Core. Backtracking to merely "review" CCSS as Governor Scott also did in 2014 before the rebrand almost cost both of them their gubernatorial elections. Supporting CCSS was a major reason Jeb Bush lost the presidential primary.

Parents justifiably hate Common Core, because it destroys their children's love of learning. Instead of promoting school choice that will eventually result only in a choice of venue and not curriculum, Mr. DeSantis and education commissioner nominee Richard Corcoran, if appointed, should heed parents and make sound education standards, such as pre-Common Core Florida, California or Massachusetts standards and choice of classical curriculum available to all students. They also need to back down on invasive testing, profiling, and data collection. Education is not mere workforce prep and our children not just cogs in the machine.