



Common Core Foes See Long-Term Plot

By [Blake Neff](#)
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Common Core is only one front a larger, long-running battle to centralize American education, argued a collection of conservative and libertarian opponents.

Representatives of the Cato Institute, the Homeschool Legal Defense Association, and other organizations gathered at the Heritage Foundation in Washington D.C. to make the case that while the controversial multi-state education standards may be barely half a decade old, they reflect a conflict dating back to the 1970s over whether education should be directed at the local level or in Washington.

Neal McCluskey, an associate director at the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom, emphasized Common Core's continuity with past efforts that increased Washington's role in education.

While foes of Common Core often despise it for its connections to President Obama, McCluskey argued that it had bipartisan roots among Washington technocrats who favored using the federal government's ability to fund education to shape policies at the local level. He pointed towards No Child Left Behind and President Reagan's seminal [A Nation at Risk](#) report as examples of Republican-driven developments that increased both the moral and policy role of the federal government in schooling.

Common Core, McCluskey argued, is ultimately just an outgrowth of a long-running mentality that answers persistent failure with ever-greater micromanagement at the national level.

"First the federal government funds ... and then the federal government controls," McCluskey said.

Common Core is itself only one pit stop on the way to total federal control, these conservative and libertarian education expert fear. William Estrada of the Homeschool Legal Defense Association built off of McCluskey to argue that, in the long run, Common Core's supporters will not be able to keep it restricted to public schools, but will also try spreading it to private schools and to homeschooling parents.

"One day, if we have a one size fits all approach to education, policy makers will say 'Why are those homeschoolers not taking the same tests? Why are those private-schoolers not taking the same tests? How do we know if they're actually getting a good education?'" said Estrada.

Estrada suggested that Common Core is already getting harder to avoid, pointing out that the SAT is adapting itself to reflect the standards. Students at private and home schools will soon be at an undeserved disadvantage in college applications if they persist in avoiding Common Core's content, he added.

Stanley Kurtz, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a contributing editor at National Review, staked the claim that the individuals behind Common Core are actively seeking to create common standards for every other subject as well.

As evidence, he cited the current feud between conservatives and the College Board over the contents of the AP United States History (APUSH) test. This year, the College Board is significantly changing the APUSH exam to put a greater emphasis on writing and make the test more like collegiate history courses. Conservatives, however, have complained that the changes are serving to downplay American achievements and present a left-wing vision of the country's history.

Since Common Core focuses on math and English standards throughout K-12, while APUSH is simply one advanced high school history class, the two may appear unrelated, but Kurtz said they are in fact closely intertwined. The current president of the College Board, David Coleman, was also closely involved in the creation of Common Core, and that link is no coincidence, said Kurtz. Rather, Coleman's presence at the College Board is evidence of a "concerted and coordinated" effort to craft a national curriculum in every subject of note.

"By forcing revisions on the teaching of U.S. history through the College Board, Common Core supporters ... have found a backdoor way to seize control of subjects that would be too hot to handle if formally labeled 'Common Core,'" Kurtz said. Nor will they stop there, he said. "Common Core covers English and math. The College Board's AP exams cover just about everything else ... David Coleman can effectively nationalize most of the curriculum."

Kurtz said that the College Board's "power grab" deserved to be placed at the center of the Common Core debate, and advocated for states to fund the creation of alternative college-level assessments in order to reduce the organization's power.