



PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CROSSHAIRS

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The Southern Poverty Law Center, based in Montgomery, Ala., is a nonprofit civil

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Members of the Alabama Tea Party gather outside the Alabama Statehouse in January 2014 to protest the state's adoption of the Common Core State Standards. Tea Party factions across the country have been among the most vocal opponents of the standards.

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Background information on the Common Core State Standards Initiative, including a timeline of key events and a list of participating states.



Mississippi state Sen. Angela Burks Hill joins Tea Party activists in a January rally calling on state lawmakers to rescind the state's participation in the Common Core. The legislature adjourned without taking such action.

E u t i S m m y

Across the United States, a fierce wave of resistance is engulfing the Common Core State Standards, threatening to derail this ambitious effort to lift student achievement and, more fundamentally, to undermine the very idea of public education.

Developed by the National Governors Association and an association of state school superintendents, the standards were conceived as a way to promote U.S. competitiveness, increase educational equity, and resolve problems created by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Now being implemented in 44 states, the standards do not mandate the use of any particular book or course of study. Instead, they identify the literacy and math skills that children in every public school should master at each grade level.

But to the most extreme critics of the Common Core, the standards are something quite different—a plan to indoctrinate young children into “the homosexual lifestyle,” a conspiracy to turn children into “green serfs” who will serve a totalitarian “New World Order.”

To the propaganda machine on the right, the Common Core—an effort driven by the states—is actually “Obamacore,” a nefarious federal plot to wrest control of education from local school systems and parents. Instead of the “death panels” of “Obamacare,” the fear is now “government indoctrination camps.”

The disinformation campaign is being driven by the likes of Fox News, the John Birch Society, Tea Party factions, and the Christian Right. National think tanks and advocacy groups associated with the Koch brothers, whose father was a founding Birch member, have taken up the cause.

By raising the specter of “Obamacore,” activists on the radical right hope to gain leverage against their real target—public education itself.

The Christian Right is reprising themes from earlier battles over the teaching of evolution, school prayer, sex education, and more recent efforts to stop the bullying of LGBT students. Their moneyed allies seek to privatize the education landscape.

To be sure, education experts of all political stripes have raised important questions about the Common Core. Are the standards too rigorous? Are they rigorous enough? Should children and teachers be evaluated on standardized testing? Has there been ample time for implementation and teacher training?

These and other issues should be the focus of robust debate—one rooted in the facts. Unfortunately, the issues are being obscured by a cloud of overheated hyperbole, misinformation and far-right propaganda.

We must do better.

America’s 50 million schoolchildren and the dedicated educators who teach them deserve a sober, well-informed discussion that will help determine the richness of the education afforded children in public schools—as well as what kind of country we become.

Political leaders and policymakers at all levels must reject the extremism that has polluted the debate and focus on the real issues.

Equally important, they must stand up for public education, one of our nation’s greatest accomplishments and a linchpin not only of our prosperity but of the American ideal of equality for all.

I t/du etj

One evening in January, hundreds of people eagerly crowded into the pews of the Calvary Baptist Church in Dothan, Ala., to hear about a new threat to America: the Common Core State Standards.

The star attraction was David Barton, one of the evangelical right's leading luminaries and a self-taught "historian" who promotes the view that the United States was founded as a Christian nation that should be ruled by biblical principles. Joined by figures from the state's Republican Party, the state school board and Tea Party groups, Barton rattled off a litany of criticisms of the Common Core—complaints that are stirring outrage among the conservative grassroots and threatening to derail the bipartisan, business-backed effort to create a single set of standards for what children in America's public schools should be able to do at each grade level.

To hear Barton tell it, the Common Core is another move by "progressives" to ruin public education. He traces the beginning of education's downhill trajectory to U.S. Supreme Court rulings in the early 1960s that outlawed school-sanctioned prayer and Bible readings. Now, through the Common Core, he claims, progressives want to force-feed liberal dogma to children, taking schools even further away from teaching through the lens of Christian fundamentalism. Progressives, he contends, want "the kids to rely on the government for their knowledge and help." Even homeschooled

Scenes like this are playing out in hundreds of churches, statehouse hearing rooms and other venues across the country as the Christian Right and other conservative activists attack the Common Core as a liberal plot to turn public schools into anti-American, anti-God indoctrination camps that churn out submissive automatons who will unquestioningly serve the interests of the government and big business. The irony of the anti-America charge is that the only required texts named in the Common Core standards are the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address.

Until recently, few outside the education community had ever heard of the Common Core, a set of standards for English language arts/literacy and math. Developed under the auspices of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, they were adopted voluntarily by 45 states, although Indiana recently pulled out. Teachers have begun to adjust their instruction accordingly.

Now, thanks to a committed group of activists and the backing of powerful conservative advocacy groups, the Common Core has become a political touchstone—a rallying cry for the Christian Right and many activists associated with the radical right.

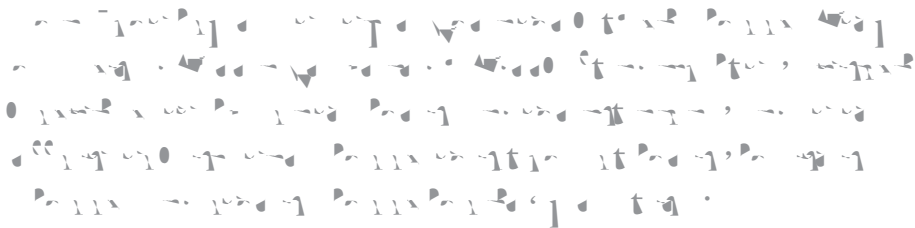
This fight comes at a time when the public school system has already been weakened by deep funding cuts, vitriolic political attacks on teachers and their unions, and state efforts to privatize schools through vouchers, charter schools and other “school choice” measures.

L itim t isə ş, b su /d

To be sure, criticism of the Common Core—which is backed by the Obama administration and funded, in part, by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—is coming from all points on the political spectrum and from some leading education experts. Critics have raised important issues that should be thoroughly debated, such as: whether the standards were adequately tested; whether we can have great education that isn't simply “teaching to the test”; whether there has been ample time for implementation and teacher training; and, significantly, whether it's wise to evaluate teachers on the results of Common Core-aligned tests.

But these and other issues are being obscured by a cloud of fear-mongering propaganda and extremist hyperbole. The attacks from the far right stand apart from the legitimate criticism because of their incendiary language, their apocalyptic warnings, and their reliance on distortions, outright falsehoods and antigovernment conspiracy theories.

Eagle Forum founder Phyllis Schlafly, for example, blasts the Common Core for its



Common Core to Nazism, communism and to the “ultimate goal” of setting up “internment or re-education camps.”

Politicians associated with the Tea Party are weighing in, too. U.S. Rep. Jim Bridenstine of Oklahoma says the standards are “much like socialism.” Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul has called it “a dangerous curriculum,” though it’s not a curriculum at all.

As outlandish as these claims sound, they are part and parcel of the campaign against what some opponents call “Obamacore.” And they’re gaining widespread exposure and acceptance, even in mainstream media.

“This is a war,” said Towns, the Alabama GOP operative. “This is a battle for control of our children.”

h i t s b, y m

From a historical perspective, the Common Core is just the latest bogeyman in a fierce propaganda and political war being waged against the very concept of providing a publicly funded, secular education to every child. In some ways, it’s a proxy for the broader fight against the institution itself.

The Christian Right’s disdain for public education has been growing since the movement began its rise as a political power beginning in the 1970s. Prior to that, the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision to desegregate public schools led to a decades-long flight of white children away from public schools and into private Christian academies, particularly in the South and urban areas with large concentrations of African Americans. Subsequent decisions outlawing school prayer and further ensuring the secular nature of public schools only deepened the animosity, helping to catalyze the massive homeschooling movement. As early as 1979, the Rev. Jerry Falwell said he hoped to see the day when “we won’t have any public schools. The churches will have taken them over and Christians will be running them.” More recently, school-based efforts to protect children from anti-gay bullying and to promote the acceptance of LGBT students have further inflamed Christian Right activists.

Like Barton, many of these activists contend that instead of teaching correct Christian principles, today’s schools corrupt children by, among other things, teaching them to be gay or sexually promiscuous. Hence, no conscientious parent would send children there. Homeschooling and private religious schools are seen as the only moral choices. Though no one knows for sure, it’s estimated that somewhere between 2 and 3 million U.S. children are being homeschooled, most of them by parents who identify themselves as evangelical Christians.

Now, with the Common Core as a sort of unified field theory for everything the Christian Right despises about public education and with the federal government as the villain, its cause has been infused with energy from various Tea Party factions, antigovernment “Patriot” groups like the John Birch Society, and other far-right extremists not

usually linked to education issues but with ideological views that fit comfortably with opposition to public schools.

Black Lives Matter

As the attacks on the Common Core mount, so do the more general attacks on public schools themselves.

THE CHRIS IAN RIGH AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS



1948



1954



1962

1963

(*McCollum v. Board of Education*)

(*Brown v. Board of Education*)

(*Tudor v. Board of Education*)

(*Engel v. Vitale*)

(*Murray v. Curlett; Abington Township School District v. Schempp*)



1971

1972



1973



1980s

1982

(*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*)

(*Wright v. Council of the City of Emporia; United States v. Scotland Neck City Board of Education*)

(*Norwood v. Harrison*)

(*Bob Jones University v. U.S.; Goldsboro Christian Schools v. U.S.*)



1995



1996



1999

2002





What is the Common Core?

The vitriol surrounding the Common Core State Standards should come as no surprise in light of the false starts and previous tempests that have punctuated education reform



NCLB, which expanded federal oversight of public education by linking federal funds to standardized results, notably failed to address question “b.” While the law placed enormous emphasis on student evaluation and the collection of performance data (enforced by strict Title I financial penalties when the numbers weren’t satisfactory), it offered no national achievement standards. That was left to the states. The law created a huge incentive to game the system: Some states evaded accountability for poor schools by simply weakening both their standards and the tests designed to assess students’ mastery of them.

A decade later, the achievement levels of high school seniors varied alarmingly from state to state. Graduating from high school did not necessarily mean a student had the skills to go further—in fact, 60 percent of those entering two-year colleges needed remedial courses. Even more alarming, college and career success often depended on variables like language, race and ZIP code.

Common Core

The stated goal of the Common Core is to ensure that all students—regardless of where they live—graduate from high school prepared to succeed in entry-level college courses or enter the workforce. Underlying that goal was the desire to increase global competitiveness.

Although adoption occurs at the discretion of the individual states (and Washington, D.C.), the Common Core has the potential to replace 51 disparate sets of English language arts/literacy and mathematics standards of uneven quality with a nationally benchmarked and validated single set (although some highly respected education experts question the standards’ validity). Not only do common standards ostensibly make it easier to measure students’ progress, they encourage collaboration and continuity among states regarding textbooks, teaching materials, assessments and other tools, leading to an overall raising of the bar.

Common Core standards are posted on a bulletin board in a second-grade classroom in Indianapolis. They’re being implemented in 44 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories and in Defense Department schools. Indiana has dropped the Common Core.

In addition to equity and continuity, the Common Core architects also had global competitiveness firmly in mind. The academic performance of U.S. students, particularly in math and science, is not on par with many industrialized countries. Worse, in most of these countries, the population entering the workforce is at least as well-educated as the population retiring, while in the United States new workers are less well-educated. These educational shortcomings could profoundly impede the nation's ability to remain globally competitive—presumably a primary reason many private sector organizations like the Business Roundtable and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce endorse the Common Core.

Whether the Common Core can actually help improve college and career readiness, make the U.S. education system more equitable, or help the country become more competitive globally remains to be seen. However, being clear about its goals and the landscape in which they emerged can help guard against the type of inflammatory rhetoric currently distracting from legitimate debate.

Dy i h Cmm C

The seeds of the Common Core State Standards were planted in 2007 when members of the National Governors Association (NGA) began discussing the possibility of aligning the diverse standards of their respective states to ensure educational equity across states and geographic regions. This alignment effort would address the widening achievement gaps by closing what are, in essence, opportunity gaps for children living in areas where access to college-aligned education is limited.

The NGA workgroup soon expanded to include the Council of Chief State School Officers, an association of state school superintendents. The two state-based organizations partnered with Achieve, a nonprofit organization specializing in college and career readiness, and appointed teams that included teachers, school administrators and education researchers to draft the new standards, with input from teachers and the public.

Several high-profile names are linked to development of the Common Core, including David Coleman (Student Achievement Partners and the College Board), William McCallum (University of Arizona), Phil Daro (Strategic Education Research Partnership), Jason Zimba and Susan Pimentel (Student Achievement Partners). The private sector was heavily involved in funding the effort. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest single private funder, has poured more than \$170 million so far into developing and implementing the standards. Other contributors include the Pearson Foundation—established and partly funded by the Pearson Publishing Company—and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The standards—for English language arts/literacy and mathematics—were released in June of 2010. That month, the NGA Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers released a report outlining the findings of the 25-member Validation Committee. The committee found the standards to be “[r]eflective of the core knowledge and skills in ELA [English language arts] and mathematics that students need to be

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As states began implementing the Common Core, a backlash began to brew, and it grew more ferocious by the day.

Amid the legitimate concerns expressed by parents, teachers and education experts, distortions and blatant falsehoods began to sprout and spread. Many of the criticisms are altogether unrelated to the standards but are freighted with themes from the Christian Right's long-running battles over sex education, textbooks, school prayer, the teaching of evolution, LGBT issues, and secular teaching in general. Some of the claims are quite inflammatory, like the contention that children will be "sexualized" at a young age or "indoctrinated" into a "homosexual" lifestyle.

"We all expected and welcomed vigorous educational debate about the standards," noted Carrie Heath Phillips of the Council of Chief State School Officers. "What surprised us was the people and organizations who've taken as their mission to continuously spew out these untruths."

The most common falsehoods: The federal government is dictating a specific curriculum that schools must follow; school districts and states will lose local control; the standards force liberal political and anti-Christian dogma onto students; and testing associated with the standards is part of a government and big business plot to track personal information about students from kindergarten to adulthood.

None of this is true, insists Chester Finn of the Fordham Institute, which supports the standards. "There is no federal control," he said. And, as for the Common Core enforcing political and anti-religious beliefs, "this is total paranoia."

In 2013, the propaganda blitz worsened as the issue began to set the conservative grassroots ablaze.

Even as local and state groups associated with the Christian Right, the Tea Party and the antigovernment "Patriot" movement were springing into action, national groups were working hard to stir the pot. These included the Cato Institute, Heritage Foundation, which calls the Common Core the "next massive effort to further centralize education," and the Chicago-based Heartland Institute, which published a 20-page booklet and established a content-rich Web page for activists called "Fight the Common Core." Homeschooling organizations, notably the Home School Legal Defense Association, also have been active.

Among those pushing the issue are advocacy groups associated with and funded by David and Charles



Right-wing advocacy groups associated with billionaires David (top) and Charles Koch are fuelling grassroots opposition to the Common Core.

Koch, the billionaire industrialists who fund many conservative causes and candidates. Politico, the online news outlet, reported in January 2014 that a draft action plan by FreedomWorks lays out the following agenda: “First, mobilize to strike down the Common Core. Then push to expand school choice by offering parents tax credits or vouchers to help pay tuition at private and religious schools. Next, rally the troops to abolish the U.S. Department of Education. Then it’s on to eliminating teacher tenure.”

The group’s director of grassroots activism, Whitney Neal, told Politico the group would kick off a “huge campaign” to “connect the dots” between killing the Common Core and other conservative priorities. She said a major march in Washington was being planned for this summer, perhaps with Glenn Beck.

Another Koch-backed group, Americans for Prosperity, is also pressing the issue in a series of town hall meetings across the country.

So what is the end game for the Kochs?

The 1980 Libertarian Party platform provides some perspective. David Koch ran for vice president on the party’s ticket that year, when its platform called for the “complete separation of education and State.” It went on: “Government schools lead to the indoctrination of children and interfere with the free choice of individuals. Government ownership, operation, regulation, and subsidy of schools and colleges should be ended.”

American Principles Project

The American Principles Project (APP) has been highly influential in galvanizing grassroots opposition across the country, in particular by producing videos, reports, websites and other materials that helped provide the intellectual framework for local organizers. The group says it is spending \$500,000 to fight the Common Core.

The small, Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit was founded by Princeton University law professor Robert George, a constitutional scholar who is considered one of the leading thinkers of the Christian Right. George has also long been active in opposing LGBT equality. He was a founder of the National Organization for Marriage and he also helped found the Witherspoon Institute, a conservative think tank.

promiscuity, pornography, violence, and “other corruptions.” One of its projects, American Principles in Action, has led campaigns against teaching about LGBT people in schools and has worked against the repeal of the military’s anti-gay “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.

In 2012, the APP released a report, *Countdown to the Takeover: How the Common Core Standards are a Federal Takeover of Education*, that portrays the standards as a federal takeover of education. The following year, in September 2013, the group co-sponsored an anti-Common Core conference at Notre Dame University, drawing more than 200 activists from states as diverse as California, Louisiana, Massachusetts and Michigan. It also has released numerous videos about the Common Core and has sent representatives to testify against implementing the program at several state legislative hearings. It regularly sends speakers to panel discussions and grassroots events around the country.

The APP materials appear, for the most part, to contain rather arcane critiques: the standards are mediocre, the costs to states will be too high, states will lose autonomy, etc. But in a video on the group’s website, APP Senior Fellow Jane Robbins warns of dark forces at work behind the scenes, in language echoing the conspiracy theories of Patriot groups. The standards, she says, are part of a “utopian, grandiose planning for a managed global economy” long sought by “progressives, or socialists as they have historically been known.” The Common Core is part of a “new vision” for America that advances “the model of a command economy and unlimited government.”

This theme is striking a chord with social conservatives who are being organized to fight the Common Core in their own states by national groups with state and local chapters.

One of the most active is Concerned Women for America (CWA), a group founded in 1979 by Beverly LaHaye, the wife of Timothy LaHaye, the evangelical minister and author of the *Left Behind* series of Christian novels. The CWA was founded to fight feminism but today seeks to “bring Biblical principles into all levels of public policy.” It has a big megaphone. According to Right Wing Watch, the group boasts more than 500,000 members in 500 chapters and a daily radio show that reaches more than 1 million people.

In case the government leaders don't pick up the message, the JBS's American Opinion Foundation is paying travel expenses for alleged education experts to testify against the Common Core in states like Wisconsin that have held investigative hearings on the standards.

Phyllis Schlafly, who founded the Eagle Forum in 1972 to fight the feminist movement and the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, also has found in the Common Core a new battlefield in the culture war. She has crusaded against it for three years through her columns, radio shows and Eagle Forum affiliates across the country. Sounding much like those in the Patriot movement, she claims it will bring this country a totalitarian government.

Other Eagle Forum leaders also wave the New World Order/Agenda 21 red flag. In an interview published on the Patriot website Renew America in March 2013, the president of Eagle Forum Palm Springs, Christina Michas, linked the Common Core to "the ultimate goal" of setting up "internment or re-education camps for those that will not comply with their sick agenda. You either are 'retrained' or you will have to be eliminated."

Such talk refers to the false conspiracy theory, promoted by Patriot groups including the JBS, that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is building concentration camps to imprison political dissidents.

Last August, Schlafly wrote a letter to Catholic bishops warning them to stay away from the Common Core. She blasted the standards for "active promotion of gay marriage, and other federal efforts designed to dismantle moral society. ... We cannot remain complacent as this administration takes aim at our children. ... The laity needs to hear from the bishops on this issue."

The letter was reprinted in *Catholic*, a lay Catholic magazine, under the heading "Common Core: A Threat to Catholic Education." On the heels of Schlafly's well-publicized letter and the APP's Notre Dame conference in September, more than 100 Catholic professors signed a public letter to U.S. bishops in November denouncing the standards and urging bishops to ignore them or to reverse the decision in more than 100 dioceses where they were already approved.

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errors and distortions. Barton’s most recent, *The Jefferson Lies*, was withdrawn from the market and recalled by the world’s largest Christian publisher in 2012 because it contained so many factual mistakes. That year, readers of the nonpartisan History News Network, affiliated with George Mason University, voted the book “least credible history book in print.”

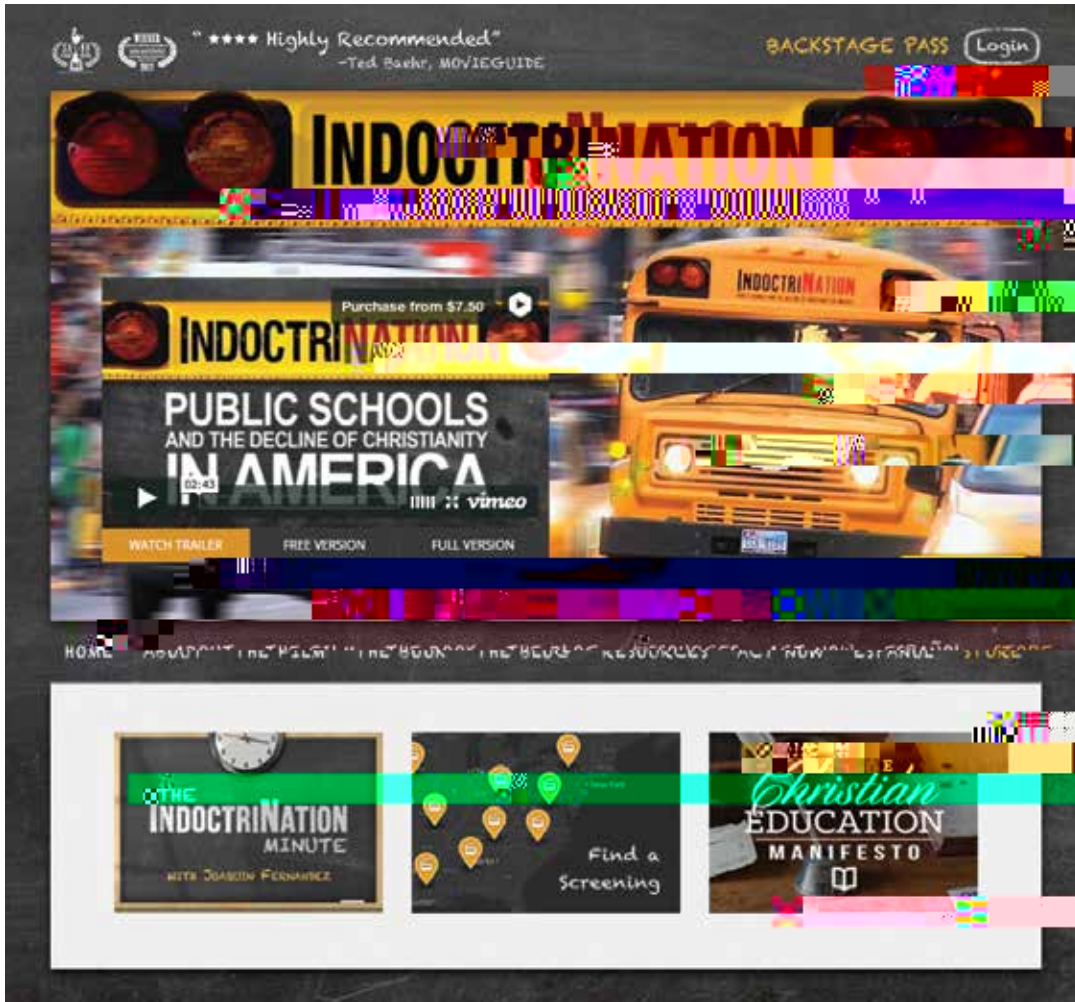
But Barton continues to enthrall Christian Right audiences. Lately, he’s been spinning tall tales about the Common Core.

Beck’s conferences, moderated by Barton, drew activists from around the country with the goal of mapping out coordinated attacks on the Common Core. Beck calls it “the biggest story in American history. ... It is Communism, we are dealing with evil.”

On his website and BlazeTV Internet-based show, Beck has repeatedly railed against the standards, often in apocalyptic terms. “We will not save our country unless we save it first from this attack,” he said. The headlines on his site include: “Do Common Core’s roots date back to America’s earliest socialists?” and “Common Core: A Lesson Plan for Raising Up Compliant, Non-Thinking Citizens.”

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Malkin has written extensively on the Common Core in his book *The Jefferson Lies* and in the *Wall Street Journal*.



Public Education Assult

The documentary *IndocriNation: Public Schools and the Decline of Christianity in America*, promoted on the website above, contends that public schools are unconstitutional, were created to instill communist ideas, and “are not an option” for Christians.

The attacks on the Common Core are, in many ways, simply a proxy for a broader assault on public education itself, one of America’s greatest achievements and a cornerstone of its democracy.

As the standards are hotly debated, schools and teachers are being dragged through the mud by Christian Right culture warriors whose cause has been joined not only by Tea Party factions and radical antigovernment activists but by powerful right-wing think tanks and advocacy groups with an even more expansive agenda to privatize education. Indeed, the Koch brothers-affiliated group FreedomWorks, which helped birth the Tea Party movement, is scheming to use the Common Core debate to build support for the private school vouchers and other “school choice” measures, and to abolish the U.S. Department of Education.

It would be easy for many Americans to dismiss the most incendiary claims about public education as the rantings of extremists who have no real influence. That would be a mistake. These allegations are being absorbed by millions of Americans and are entering the mainstream public discourse.

For decades, education debates often revolved around ways to improve education. Today, many of the critics offer no suggestions for reform. Instead, they contend that our secular neighborhood schools are rotten to the core, and the only hope is to turn back the clock to church-affiliated education and “every family for itself” homeschooling. That is the mantra of *Let No One Put a Stop to the Defeat of Common Schools*, the movement’s rallying-cry documentary, released in 2011 and funded, according to *Market Justice*, by companies that produce homeschooling materials.

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Buffalo attorney and libertarian blogger James Ostrowski strongly agrees. Author of the 2009 book *Getting Out of the Public Schools: A Guide to Homeschooling*, sold on Amazon and available on Kindle, Ostrowski also thinks public education deserves to die. “It is time to pull the plug on this failed 150-year-old experiment and move on,” he writes. As do many anti-public school activists, Ostrowski idealizes a distant, rural-centric era when children were taught privately. “Many government schools are turning into fornicatoriums featuring more and more sex, and less and less education.” They’re destructive hives of violence and drug abuse, his book claims. There’s only one solution: Get your children out.

This isn’t innocuous rhetoric. It’s a stab that points disproportionately at children of color and the poor. As a result of white flight to private academies and homeschooling, and the nation’s changing demographics, minorities now comprise nearly half of public school students—nearly double the percentage of three decades ago. They are on track

“These standards will have to be carefully implemented, and that remains to be seen,” Barth said. “Right now, the public is just not getting good information, and a lot of bad information on Common Core is out there.”

A nascent political backlash is also evident at the federal level, particularly among Republicans aligned with the Tea Party.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul has joined with seven other senators, including Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, to sponsor legislation prohibiting federal financing for any Common Core component. Paul has called the Common Core “a dangerous new curriculum” marred by “the same old radical Progressive ideology in a new package.” In 2013, he declared, “Instead of teaching about our Constitution, it will teach students to be ‘global citizens.’” Paul may not be aware of this, but the Preamble to the Constitution is among the handful of texts actually required by the Common Core. The others are the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address.

Other members of Congress, too, are buying into the anti-Common Core propaganda. U.S. Rep. Jim Bridenstine of Oklahoma, a first-term Tea Party Republican, said in a March interview with Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council that the standards are “much like socialism.” He added, “Socialism has been spreading poverty equally across the world and that’s not what we believe in. We believe in exceptionalism and that’s what our country should be advancing, not commonality.”

Controversy over the Common Core also appears to be shaping the early contours of the GOP’s intraparty fight for the presidential nomination in 2016. Jeb Bush, a strong proponent of the standards, is taking heat from hard-right elements of his party. “This is a real-world, grown-up approach to a real crisis that we have, and it’s mired in politics,” Bush said in March during a Tennessee event promoting the standards. Some other potential candidates, including Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, appear to be equivocating after earlier supporting the Common Core.

Meanwhile, mainstream business interests, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, find themselves increasingly at odds with social conservatives and the Tea Party factions.

But there’s an even bigger game at play.

Advocacy groups are

pondering the possibility of a

Common Core Myths

MYTH: The Common Core dictates curricula to local school districts and teachers, telling them which texts to use and what to teach.

FACT: The Common Core is not a curriculum at all. Rather, it is a set of standards, spelling-

funding—to encourage state adoption of the Common Core or other rigorous standards. These funds account for less than 1 percent of all spending on education.

MYTH: The Common Core invades the privacy of students by requiring the collection of data that will be sold by the federal government to private interests.

FACT

taught in public schools—are not required reading under the Common Core. Rather, they are listed as examples of texts that would help students reach achievement goals. Third, because the standards do not promote Christianity, and public schools are, by law, bastions of secular learning, the standards are deemed anti-Christian. The fact is, the standards contain nothing whatsoever that promotes anti-Christian views. And, as noted above, the only required texts are uniquely American—the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address.

MYTH: The Common Core promotes homosexuality and the acceptance of a “homosexual agenda.”

FACT: Like many others, this allegation appears to be based on objections to certain of the exemplar texts, which are not required reading under the Common Core. In other cases, it relies on anecdotal stories about lessons adopted by states, local school districts or individual teachers—the very entities the critics contend should be making these decisions. A Tea Party leader in Alabama told a state Senate committee, “We don’t want our children to lose their innocence, beginning in preschool or kindergarten, told that homosexuality is OK and should be experienced at an early age and that same-sex marriages are OK.” The basis for her statement is unclear. Some groups have linked this claim to the American Institutes for Research (AIR), a firm that has been hired by some states to create Common Core-aligned tests. They contend the AIR promotes a “homosexual lifestyle” among children because it has published materials for schools on LGBT issues.

MYTH: The Common Core is part of the larger “New World Order” plot by devious globalists, including President Obama, to enslave humanity under a socialistic, totalitarian world government.

FACT: Antigovernment “Patriot” activists and groups—most notably the John Birch Society—have linked the Common Core to broader conspiracy theories about the United

States and the U.S. Supreme Court. The John Birch Society—(link) and the

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This report was prepared under the editorial guidance of Intelligence Project Director Heidi Beirich and Teaching Tolerance Director Maureen Costello. The editor was Booth Gunter. It was researched and written by Marilyn Elias, Booth Gunter, Adrienne van der Valk and Maureen Costello. Researchers also included Josh Glasstetter, Evelyn Schlatter and Emily Chiariello. The report was designed by Sunny Paulk.



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