Is the "Common Core" Educational Standards Initiative Part of a Domestic Spy Program?

The US Department of Education and the P-20 Agenda

By Timothy Alexander Guzman

Region: USA
Theme: Police State & Civil Rights

In 2009, US President Barack Obama and the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan had announced the "Race to the Top" initiative to reform the American education system. But there is a lot more to know about the new education standards known as the *'Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI).'* It is not about educating students for a better life or for a successful career, it sounds more like a domestic spy program. In a 2010, Arne Duncan gave a speech on Obama's education agenda at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris and said:

> The North Star guiding the alignment of our cradle-to-career education agenda is President Obama's goal that, by the end of the decade, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. That goal can only be achieved by creating a strong cradle-to-career continuum that starts with early childhood learning and extends all the way to college and careers

It is bizarre just to think that the government may want to continue to monitor your progress after high school right through your first job or career. What happens if you don't get along with the manager? Will they send you to a re-education camp? Of course I am being sarcastic, but with Washington's growing police state, who knows? The Department of Education (DOE) released in October 2012 an *"Issue Brief"* titled *'Enhancing, Teaching and Learning through Educational Data Mining and Learning Analytics.'* The Educational data mining procedures were described as a program to track student's progress through their behavioural patterns so that school officials can predict which career path they will most likely choose or if there is enough evidence to suggest that they were most likely to drop out of school. The *Issue Brief* clearly states how data mining technology would operate:

> A student learning database (or other big data repository) stores time-stamped student input and behaviors captured as students work within the system" and "A predictive model combines demographic data (from an external student information system) and learning/behavior data from the student learning database to track a student's progress and make predictions about his or her future behaviors or performance, such as future course outcomes and dropouts

The US Department of Education's Common Core standards does raise an important question. Why does the federal government want student's personal information in order to achieve educational success? The DOE's "Issue Brief" also stated how predictions must be proven. If they cannot prove that their assessment is correct, then they may collect even

more data on the student's behalf if necessary:

> Policymakers bear an ethical responsibility to investigate the validity of any predictive model that is used to make consequential decisions about students. Policymakers must be able to explain the evidence for predictions and the actions taken by the computer system on the basis of learning analytics. Analysts conducting data mining may discover patterns or associations that were previously unknown and that involve sensitive information (e.g., teacher performance or student's family situation), and validating them with external observations and further data collection will be needed

The 2009 Stimulus bill included the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) which offered governors bailout money for state educational purposes such as the 'Race to the Top' program. Competitive grants were offered as an incentive for states to accept Common Core standards for their schools. To be eligible, states had to adopt standards and assessment procedures provided by the DOE to prepare students for success in college and in their chosen careers after they graduate from high school. It requires states to build student databases such as the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) to track over "400 data points" including behavior, disciplinary history, family problems, interests and other personal information. Data will then be given to the "Smarter Balanced consortium" which is a state-led consortium working in collaboration with educators, researchers, policymakers, community groups and government bureaucrats to develop assessments that measures student progress toward college and their chosen careers. It is part of the national testing standards that sends completed assessments to the Department of Education so that they can share data with public and private interests. One particular area concerning the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund's recommendation is to establish a student data system starting from pre-K. Then States would be eligible to receive funds if they followed the basic requirements:

> As part of its application for initial funding, the state must assure that it will take actions to: (a) increase teacher effectiveness and address inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers; (b) establish and use pre-K-through-college and career data systems to track progress and foster continuous improvement; (c) make progress toward rigorous college- and career-ready standards and high-quality assessments; and (d) support targeted, intensive support and effective interventions to turn around schools identified for corrective action and restructuring

The standards focus on concepts and procedures of certain areas of concentration for example, English or math. However, each standard is labeled with an alphanumeric code for identification purposes, which is then used to identify which standards are successfully met by the lessons taught to the student. By using a coding system it allows them to track which standards were applied to the student whether in the classroom or through online learning (where third party apps can also keep a record). It can also track how much time was spent on each standard.

Who is behind "Common Core"?

Common Core Standards was supported and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Pearson Publishing Company, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, several Governors and school officials from various

states. It is also funded by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp called 'Amplify Education.' In 2012, Bob Corcoran of General Electric donated more than $33 million to the Common Core project. In 2013, Reuters reported who funded the $100 million project in an article titled *'K-12 student database jazzes tech startups, spooks parents'*:

> The database is a joint project of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which provided most of the funding, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and school officials from several states. Amplify Education, a division of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, built the infrastructure over the past 18 months. When it was ready, the Gates Foundation turned the database over to a newly created nonprofit, inBloom Inc, which will run it.
>
> States and school districts can choose whether they want to input their student records into the system; the service is free for now, though inBloom officials say they will likely start to charge fees in 2015. So far, seven states – Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Massachusetts – have committed to enter data from select school districts. Louisiana and New York will be entering nearly all student records statewide

The article also stated how the database would operate on a local and federal level:

> But the most influential new product may be the least flashy: a $100 million database built to chart the academic paths of public school students from kindergarten through high school. In operation just three months, the database already holds files on millions of children identified by name, address and sometimes social security number. Learning disabilities are documented, test scores recorded, attendance noted. In some cases, the database tracks student hobbies, career goals, attitudes toward school – even homework completion.
>
> Local education officials retain legal control over their students' information. But federal law allows them to share files in their portion of the database with private companies selling educational products and services

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and their 'inBloom' database were one of the data mining programs associated with Common Core. But it has recently failed because New York state legislature forced its state education bureaucrats to shut down the Gates-funded project amid growing opposition of parents and privacy advocates. It was designed to collect student data and store the information in a cloud service and make it available to commercial vendors and apps so that teachers can eventually track student's progress. Bill Gates and his project has failed and that is only one battle both parents and privacy advocates has won and that is a good start. But it is only one battle, with many more to come. Although the Bill Gates project *inBloom* has failed, the DOE will still manage to track students.

Collecting Data from "Pre-K through workforce"

Common Core standards require an invasion of privacy in order to educate students, but it comes at a cost. It should concern both students and their families. Will Estrada, director of federal relations for the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) told World Net Daily what common core's data collection is capable of achieving once it is fully implemented. He said *"It's their likes and dislikes, grade-point average all the way through*

school, their home situation, health questions," he said. "It's an incredibly invasive collection of information that they are trying to collect in what they call P-20, or pre-K through workforce."

Private interests in Washington decided back in 2007 to move full force in an attempt to nationalize educational standards and curriculums, which started the early development of the Common Core project. After the stimulus bill was signed in 2009, the DOE's *"Race to the Top"* program was born. The DOE made *'Race to the Top'* grants competitive so that states would jump aboard rapidly and agree to implement Common Core standards that would be aligned with mandatory national tests. Most US states adopted Common Core for federal money without any approval or votes from legislators' and without public knowledge. Parents and communities were not even aware that their states and their elected representatives had adopted Common Core in the first place. Besides data collection, the education Common Core provides is based on rigorous test taking procedures and memorization. Parents in Brooklyn, New York pulled their children in protest against the standardized tests saying that it brought unnecessary stress onto their children.

Washington's goal is for Common Core to be implemented in every state by 2015. So far 44 states adopted Common Core standards although it has been an uphill battle for Washington's education plan, especially when it comes to privacy concerns regarding students' personal data. With a majority of states adopting Common Core Standards, it seems that there is an uphill battle for the growing anti-common core movement as well.

Will parents, privacy advocates and even teachers who oppose Common Core continue the battle well into the future? I believe they will, especially when it involves their children's education. What is the real agenda behind Common Core? Does collecting personal data so that bureaucrats can analyze your progress over a period of time improve your chances of getting a better education and a career? After all, they can barely create any new jobs for recent college graduates, yet Secretary Duncan says the US will have the *"highest proportion of college graduates"* in the world. With NSA revelations spying on the entire planet, it would not surprise me that the Department of Education is setting the stage for a domestic spy program on a personal level

The original source of this article is Silent Crow News
Copyright © Timothy Alexander Guzman, Silent Crow News, 2014

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: **Timothy Alexander Guzman**

About the author:

Timothy Alexander Guzman is an independent researcher and writer with a focus on political, economic, media and historical spheres. He has been published in Global Research, The Progressive Mind,

European Union Examiner, News Beacon Ireland, WhatReallyHappened.com, EIN News and a number of other alternative news sites. He is a graduate of Hunter College in New York City.