Democracy & Education

A Democratic Critique of the Common Core English Language Arts (ELA) Standards.

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Abstract

Parents, educators, and students have criticized the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects for expecting students to regurgitate evidence from assigned texts rather than think for themselves. This article argues that this popular critique is accurate and that the Common Core, regardless of its advocates' intentions, has undemocratic consequences. Initially, the essay considers a democratic argument for the Common Core. Then, I show that the standards themselves, faithfully implemented, lead to assignments and assessments that give students few opportunities to articulate their own thoughts or responses. I argue that this kind of education does not inculcate democratic habits and that democratic education requires empowering people in the local school community to construct their own education standards.

This article is in response to

Bindewald, B. J., Tannebaum, R. P., & Womac, P. (2016). The Common Core and democratic education: Examining potential costs and benefits to public and private autonomy. *Democracy & Education*, *24*(2), Article 4. Available at: https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol24/iss2/4/.

In the spring of 2017, my wife and I joined the hundreds of thousands of parents in refusing the end-of-year Common Core tests. For the entire school year, our children in fifth and third grades had been working through the New York State Education Department Common Core Curriculum and previous years' Common Core tests. The Common Core identifies a narrow range of performance expectations in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, and nearly everything outside of this range was being expunged from the school day. Once, the local school district dedicated Fridays to projects and field trips; now, Fridays are test days, but this is somewhat misleading: Nearly every day has some component of testing. High-stakes tests determine whether teachers and administrators keep their jobs based on student test score growth or proficiency. Test refusal is one way that parents can signal their disapproval of the high-stakes Common Core testing regime.

For some democrats, the Common Core standards themselves are good, but problems arise because of implementation. Bindewald, Tannebaum, and Womac (2016), for instance, argued that the standards inculcate private autonomy, or the ability "to think for oneself, to set one's own goals, and to pursue those goals free from excessive outside influence" (p. 1). The standards also prepare

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students for public autonomy, or to contribute to the community's "capacity to influence public life and shape public policy" (p. 1). Looking at the standards themselves, Bindewald, Tannebaum, and Womac contended that the Common Core "lays out a general vision of what it means to be a literate person in the 21st century. Particularly, the standards are designed to cultivate students who demonstrate a range of characteristics relating to critical thinking and autonomous decision making" (p. 7). They thought that the Common Core standards could place greater emphasis on citizenship, but they warned people not to blame the standards for certain assignments, test questions, or associated policies such as high-stakes testing. "Poorly constructed implementation efforts do not reflect upon the quality or content of the standards themselves" (p. 8).

In this essay, I agree with Bindewald, Tannebaum, and Womac (2016) about the importance of private and public autonomy but contend that the Common Core standards themselves, regardless of their advocates' intentions, lead to an undemocratic pedagogy. Initially, I assemble evidence from parents about how the Common Core has impacted their children's education. Informed by Dewey's (2012) insight that the person who wears the shoe knows "that it pinches and where it pinches" (p. 154), I argue that families experience problems with the Common Core standards that their writers or advocates may not have foreseen. Then, I show that the first Common Core ELA anchor standard, the foundation of Common Core close reading, expects students to "cite specific textual evidence," not form or share their own thoughts. Next, I analyze examples from the New York State Education Department Common Core Curriculum and the 2017 New York Regents Common Core ELA exam to show what the Common Core means in practice. People are not just protesting when the Common Core standards are being implemented poorly; they are often protesting when they are being implemented faithfully. I then explain the undemocratic nature of the Common Core standards and argue that democratic education requires empowering educators, families, students, and the local school community to construct their own standards.

Where the Shoe Pinches

In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey (2012) explained what the relationship should be between experts and the public, all those "indirectly and seriously affected" by a certain policy (p. 58). According to Dewey, the public must articulate its own problems, call upon experts to address those problems, and then evaluate the experts' solutions to the problems. According to its advocates, the Common Core addresses the problem that not enough high school graduates are ready for college and careers. The Common Core identifies performance expectations in ELA and mathematics that will prepare them, in theory, at least, for college and careers.

In 2013, 83% of respondents to an Education Next survey said that they supported the Common Core. Four years later, however, that number had dropped to 50% (Education Next 2016). What explains the drop? One thesis is that right-wing forces mobilized Common Core opposition on social media, including "a Christian conservative grass organization that increasingly dominated the conversation by utilizing an innovative automated Twitter robot to amplify their message" (Supovitz, Daly, del Fresno, & Kolouch, 2017). This explanation, however, does not account for why support for the Common Core also plummeted among Democrats and liberal parents (Pizmony-Levy & Saraisky, 2016).

In this section, I elaborate on one critique of the Common Core that is held by many parents, teachers, and students, namely, that it gives students few opportunities to exercise autonomy. My argument is that the public has identified one place where the Common Core shoe pinches. Shortly after the Obama administration launched the Race to the Top program, Onosko (2011) warned that "all that goofy, kids-being-kids stuff that for decades was considered amusing and, at times, actually supportive of student learning will be viewed as threats to a teacher's livelihood, home, and family" (p. 5). That warning has come to pass, for my family and others. Though it is tempting to blame the tests and accountability mechanisms for the shifting tenor of American public education, I contend that the standards themselves express a philosophy of education that does not value play, creativity, or autonomy.

A newspaper out of Long Island, New York (Conry, 2015) interviewed valedictorians about their thoughts on the Common Core. Harshil Garg of Bethpage High School said:

> *I think the Common Core is absolutely terrible . . . It suppresses freedom and boxes children into a systematic way of thinking . . . Kids are special, because they color outside the lines, and think outside the box, no matter how preposterous their ideas may seem . . . To restrain that inventiveness at such an early age destroys the spark to explore.*

Rebecca Cheng of Smithtown High School West confided that the Common Core "closes your mind and forces kids to think in one particular way." Another valedictorian, Natalie Korba of Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School, said, "School should be about learning life skills and gaining knowledge, not about learning how to take a test."

This line of critique reappears in a New York State Allies for Public Education (2015) public survey about the Common Core standards. Here are a few of the responses about the ELA standards and its effects on the classroom:

> English classes have been reduced to reading a short text and then answering questions. The children need to be developing a love of reading. They need to pick up a book and read. Sometimes just for the sake of reading. Let the children enjoy getting lost in a book. It will promote a lifelong reader.
>
> Required reading is not engaging or relevant to children's interests. If we want to develop lifelong readers, we must make reading fun and exciting. The standards seem to 'suck' the joy right out.
>
> The ELA standards have deemphasized true independent thought instead focusing on regurgitating what an author has stated. This creates students incapable of adding to our society.

They do not allow for creative original thinking and are merely designed to have students parrot back what they have read without making true connections.

According to these respondents, the standards themselves expect students to regurgitate, or parrot back, the words in the assigned passage.

On social media, parents and educators often observe that the Common Core ELA standards suppress student originality or creativity. Here, for example, is what one parent (Berger, 2017) wrote on the Peekskill Parent-Teacher Organization Facebook page:

> *I also want to mention that the ELA curriculum in grades 3–8 as I have seen it implemented in my kids' classes is very much geared towards test prep. Very little imaginative creative writing, too much emphasis on non-fiction and close reading, at the middle school level there no bringing home the books that are being taught in class (they are all read at an excruciatingly slow pace during class time) and no grammar lessons.*

According to this mother, the Common Core leads to an education that is heavy on test prep and light on creative writing.

To be sure, parents can criticize the Common Core for wrong reasons (Vander Hart, 2017). In the next section, however, I argue that people are right to blame the Common Core standards for a pedagogy that expects students to give text dependent and text specific answers to questions about an assigned text.

The Common Core ELA Standards

The first Common Core ELA anchor standard is the basis of Common Core close reading. It states: "Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The subsequent eight anchor standards expect students to "cite specific textual evidence" to analyze the key ideas and details of the text, the craft and structure of the text, and the knowledge and ideas in the text. The expectation that students "cite specific textual evidence" is what it means to say that the Next Generation Science Standards, the college entrance exams the SAT and the ACT, or the College Board's Advanced Placement courses align with the Common Core (Tampio 2018). Scholars have been citing texts for millennia: What is new about the Common Core? What is distinctive is that students, to get full credit on an assignment or a test, must use *the exact words from the text*. As a student in public schools in the Washington, DC, suburbs in the 1980s and 1990s, I was taught to quote the text but also restate the main ideas in my own words. The Common Core ELA standards discourage students from using synonyms or providing evidence from outside of the four corners of the assigned text.

David Coleman is the lead writer of the Common Core ELA standards, the architect of the Common Core, and head of the College Board (Goldstein, 2012). In an essay called "Cultivating Wonder," Coleman (2013) explained that the first Common Core ELA anchor standard "emphasizes a rigorous, deductive approach to reading that challenges students to draw as much as possible from the text itself" (p. 1). Furthermore, the first anchor standard "will remain in play throughout each of the reading standards that follows. Standard 1 focuses on the command of evidence in what is read, and students must continue draw on evidence as they examine the ideas, structure or style of any text" (p. 4). Regarding the types of questions used in Common Core assignments or tests, he explained: "Great questions make the text the star of the classroom; the most powerful evidence and insight for answering lies within the text or texts being read. Most good questions are *text dependent* and *text specific* [emphasis added]" (p. 19).

Coleman and Pimentel (2012) reiterated this expectation for precisely citing the text in the "Revised Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3–12." They wrote:

> *At the heart of these criteria are instructions for shifting the focus of literacy instruction to center on careful examination of the text itself. In aligned materials, work in reading and writing (as well as speaking and listening) must center on the text under consideration. The standards focus on students reading closely to draw evidence and knowledge from the text. (p. 1)*

Finally, Coleman elaborated the philosophy of education behind the Common Core in a speech to New York educators called "Bringing the Common Core to Life" (Steiner & Coleman, 2011). He told the audience:

> *Do people know the two most popular forms of writing in the American high school today? . . . It is either the exposition of a personal opinion or it is the presentation of a personal matter. The only problem, forgive me for saying this so bluntly, the only problem with those two forms of writing is as you grow up in this world you realize people really don't give a shit about what you feel or what you think. What they instead care about is can you make an argument with evidence.*

One of the tools of the scholarly trade is citing evidence. Schools should teach children this skill. But the Common Core standards place strict stipulations on what evidence counts to earn full credit on assignments or assessments: It must be verbatim (text specific) and from the provided text (text dependent). In the next section, I offer illustrations of what this means for the kinds of work that students do in the Common Core era.

Experiencing the Common Core

According to Bindewald, Tannebaum, and Womac (2016), democratic political theorists should analyze "the standards themselves, and not the lesson plans, curriculum materials, or assessment and accountability measures associated with Common Core" (p. 2) According to Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems*, however, a researcher has to ask the people wearing the shoe how it fits rather than making assumptions based on the shoemaker's designs or intentions. In other words, the official Common Core literature provide data in an evaluation of the standards, but one should also study the consequences of the Common Core

standards on the educational experience. In this section, I examine one representative assignment and assessment to illustrate how the ELA anchor standards influence what students do in the Common Core era.

Here is one assignment from New York State Common Core Curriculum, designed by the New York State Education Department and Student Achievement Partners (SAP), an organization founded by Common Core architect David Coleman. In fifth grade, students dedicate six weeks to studying the novel *Esperanza Rising*, by Pam Muñoz Ryan. If one goes to the New York State Education Department homepage, one can download a curricular module with assignments, tests, and classroom instructions (Expeditionary Learning, 2014). Page 10, for instance, provides text-dependent questions for chapter two of *Esperanza Rising:*

1. The first paragraph on page 8 says that Esperanza would like to live at El Rancho de las Rosas with her Mama and Papa forever. Why does she feel this way? Find details from the text to explain your answer.
2. On pages 8–12, Esperanza and Mama seem to be worried about Papa. What specific words or phrases in this section of the novel help you know that they are worried? Why are they worried? Use evidence from the text in your answer.
3. On pages 14 and 15, what two pieces of advice does Abuelita give Esperanza? How does Esperanza respond to the advice? Use evidence from the text in your answer.
4. On page 18, Esperanza says that a "deep river" runs between her and Miguel. What does she mean? How does Miguel respond when she tells him this? Use details from the text in your answer.
5. At the end of the chapter, why does Esperanza feel her heart drop and that she has sunk into a "dark hole of despair and disbelief"? Use details from the text in your answer.

In this assignment, students are not asked to connect the ideas or stories in the book to anything outside of the text. Each question expects students to write down the exact words from the text. Students are not invited to describe their own experiences of how they or their relatives first came to the country, nor are they encouraged to bring in evidence from other things that they have read about the immigrant experience. My then fifth-grader's handwriting was sloppy when doing the engageNY modules, as if he was bored out of his mind—the modules virtually never asked him for his thoughts or feelings about the material. The problem was not the teacher (whom our family likes and respects) but the Common Core anchor standards' expectation that students "cite specific textual evidence."

On June 14, 2017, New York high school students took the Regents examination in Common Core English language arts. For the source-based argument portion of the test, students were provided four texts and told to write on the topic "Should school recess be structured play?" The task was to "use specific, relevant, and sufficient evidence from at least three of the texts to develop your argument." Text 1 argued that recess "will need to be planned and directed to ensure that all children are participating in moderately vigorous physical activity." Text 2 made an argument for "why children need more unstructured play." Text 3 described a study released by the Robert Wood Johns Foundation calling for a "more-structured recess time." Text 4 was called "Forget Goofing Around: Recess Has a New Boss." The scoring rubric stated that the highest-scoring essays would make "highly effective use of a wide range of specific and relevant evidence to support analysis." The instructions and rubric warned against plagiarizing, but the remedy was to "demonstrate proper citation of sources to avoid plagiarism when dealing with direct quotes and paraphrased material" (New York State Education Department, 2017a, 2017b). Students are not instructed to mention their own experiences or other outside material to justify their perspective.

One New York high school teacher wrote an op-ed for the local Gannett newspaper, the *Journal News*, wondering why so many of his students wrote their Regents exam about the need for structured recess. In response, many parents argued on social media that students were channeled into making this thesis. One parent wrote on Facebook:

> *I think the reason that students wrote essays in favor of structured recess is because they were given four articles to read on which to base their essay. Three essays clearly in favor of structured recess, one essay is not. The students probably figured that the way to a "A" on this essay is to write in favor of structured recess, whether they believed it or not. (Zirkelbach, 2017)*

Before, we learned a Long Island valedictorian said the Common Core "suppresses freedom and boxes children into a systematic way of thinking," and this test confirmed this analysis. This is not a bug of the standards; this is a feature: The first Common Core ELA anchor stand demands that students "cite specific textual evidence" from the provided passages, not express their own thoughts.

According to one Long Island valedictorian, schooling in the Common Core era means "learning how to take a test." To understand why, one needs to understand the connection between the origin of the standards and their pedagogy. Coleman and Jason Zimba led the writing process of the Common Core in 2009–2010 as states were preparing their Race to the Top applications. Race to the Top was a competitive grant program administered by the US Department of Education. States would earn points for "developing and adopting common standards," "developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments," and "supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments" (Race to the Top Program Executive Summary, 2009). In other words, states would earn points on their applications if they adopted the Common Core standards and joined a testing consortium such as the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) or the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.[1] In its Race to the Top application, PARCC said it would "administer a streamline computer-based

1 On the history of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, see Layton (2014) and Schneider (2015).

assessment"; in its application, SBAC said it would implement "Common CCSS-based computer adaptive summative assessments" (Race to the Top Assessment Application, 2010a, 2010b). In short: Coleman and Zimba wrote the Common Core standards knowing that they would be tested on computers.

In an article in *Salon* called "Computer Grading Will Destroy Our Schools," Winterhalter (2013) explained how computers, if given an algorithm, can grade essays. Programmers can write software that treats essays as "bags of words," and in the case of the Common Core, the program can give higher grades to essays that cite specific textual evidence. Computers are presently grading Common Core exams. Here is how Education Commissioner Richard Crandall justified it:

> *Automated scoring drives effective and efficient scoring of student assessments, resulting in faster results, more consistent scoring, and significant cost savings to PARCC states. This year in Colorado, roughly two-thirds of computer-based written responses will be scored using automated scoring. (cited in Haimson, 2016)*

Scholars sometimes argue that the Common Core standards revive New Criticism, a literary theory prominent in the 1950s (see White, 2015). Coleman, however, did not cite New Criticism when explaining the Common Core ELA standards. The more plausible interpretation is that Coleman wrote the ELA standards to support the Race to the Top agenda of computer testing.

Democratic Education

What is wrong with supporting one's arguments with evidence? Surely that is a skill that citizens must possess if they wish to exercise private and public autonomy, as Bindewald, Tannebaum, and Womac (2016) rightly have contended. My argument, however, is that the skill, if overemphasized, leads to an undemocratic pedagogy. Close reading of texts that other people select, in the service of answering questions that other people raise, does not teach one to think for oneself or with others. Dewey made this argument throughout his lifetime, including in a 1903 article for *The Elementary School Teacher*, "Democracy in Education."

According to Dewey (1903), "modern life means democracy" and "democracy means freeing intelligence for independent effectiveness." In the modern world, people take for granted that human beings, alone and together, can choose what to think or how to act. Modern thought signals "the emancipation of mind as an individual organ to do its own work" (p. 193). By using the word *democracy*, Dewey emphasized that everyone, at least in principle, has the ability and right to exercise this power of thinking for themselves.

If this idea sounds abstract, Dewey (1903) continued, it is because schools and educators remain in a premodern cast of mind where authorities treat students as subjects. Committees of experts and businesspeople, as well as superintendents, tell teachers and students what to do and how to do it. "It is no uncommon thing to find methods of teaching such subjects as reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic officially laid down; outline topics in history and geography are provided ready-made for the teacher; gems of literature are fitted to the successive ages of boys and girls" (p. 196).

Dewey's point does not apply exactly to the present: the federal government and states have become more powerful than local committees and superintendents, and the Common Core is a body of standards rather than a curriculum. However, political and economic elites directed the Common Core State Standards Initiative (Layton, 2014), and the standards themselves tell teachers and students what precise things to look for in a text. Furthermore, the uniform performance expectations make it possible for education reformers to micromanage the classroom, say, by requiring teachers to use approved modules aligned to the standards. From a Deweyan perspective, the education reform movement, of which the Common Core State Standards Initiative is a part, is "whittling away the democratic and human purposes of education" (Neem, 2015).

Dewey's (1903) philosophy of education maintained that the educational process should revolve around the unique interests and needs of each individual child. Dewey's point was *not* that school should be "fun"; his contention, rather, was that schools must liberate children's minds and give them freedom in the course of their studies. "Reform of education in the direction of greater play for the individuality of the child means the securing of conditions which will give outlet, and hence direction, to a growing intelligence" (p. 199). When I was a high school student, for instance, my teachers did not ask me if I wanted to do research projects; rather, they gave me wide discretion about the topics that I could investigate in depth. For my senior thesis, I wrote an extensive research paper on Italian interventions in the Spanish Civil War. I was interested in the topic—perhaps because of the Clash song "Spanish Bombs"—and my teachers encouraged me to go off on my own and research the topic. My teachers expected me to cite textual evidence to support my argument, but they also expected me to structure the argument in my own way and articulate my own point of view. The Common Core standards, by contrast, do not emphasize the student's right to choose what to read or create; virtually every Common Core assignment or assessment I've seen gives the students the texts and the questions. If Dewey (2009, p. 37) called for a Copernican revolution in education, then Coleman enacted a Ptolemaic counterrevolution that places the text, rather than the child, at the center of the educational experience.

For Dewey (1903), this is not merely a pedagogical question: it is also about what kind of political habitus we are creating. "To subject mind to an outside and ready-made material is a denial of the ideal of democracy, which roots itself ultimately in the principle of moral, self-directing individuality" (p. 199). If schools teach children to read textual passages and answer questions about them, then students will have minimal opportunities to choose their own books or pose their own questions. From the time they enter kindergarten until the time they graduate high school, students will have few chances to write from their own perspective or select their own research agendas. To be sure, there may be places where schools and teachers incorporate elements of progressive pedagogy, but this action will always confront the fact that the standards

demand that students cite specific textual evidence—*not* share their own thoughts or responses—when answering questions about a text. For Dewey, young people must be habituated to form their own thoughts and speak in their own voice if democracy as a way of life is to become a real possibility.

As a parent looking at Common Core homework, I saw assignment after assignment, assessment after assessment, requiring my children to read a short textual passage and answer questions about it using the exact words from the text. In first grade, my son used the word *cooperates* in an answer that was then marked wrong because the text said: "works together." This is not a problem of implementation; the teacher was faithfully implementing the first Common Core ELA anchor standard that requires students to "cite specific textual evidence." As our family and others can attest: the Common Core standards themselves lead to a mind-numbing and antidemocratic pedagogy.

Democracy and Education Standards

Bindewald, Tannebaum, and Womac (2016) challenged critics of the Common Core to "state that they are addressing implementation efforts or actually address the standards in their analyses" (p. 8) In this essay, I have responded to this challenge. The first Common Core ELA anchor standard demands that students "cite specific textual evidence" when answering questions about a text, and, in the lead writer's explanations, as well as in countless Common Core assignments and assessments, this means that students must use the exact words from a provided text when answering a question about it. Parents, teachers, and students have cried out that the Common Core shoe does not fit, and I have argued that the reason the shoe does not fit is because of the standards themselves. Valedictorians who say that the Common Core "boxes children into a systematic way of thinking" are correct, as are parents who say that their kids' classes are "very much geared towards test prep." The Common Core requires students to answer questions using the exact same provided words. This pedagogy does not teach children to think for themselves (personal autonomy) or in collaboration with others about our shared future (political autonomy).

As a participant in debates about the Common Core, I have heard education reformers say that the standards are good and that the problems arise from implementation. Parents and teachers often concede this point because it is hard to point to a single standard and say that this is not a skill that children should learn. The problem, I have argued in this article, is that the Common Core specifies a narrow set of testable skills. Think about all of the wonderful things that you could do in school: read literature, learn math, go on field trips, perform in school plays, conduct hands-on science experiments, do historical reenactments, and so forth. Now, however, Common Core ELA and math instruction consumes the school day. To be sure, American schools have never lived up to the Deweyan ideal, particularly for the historically disadvantaged, but the Common Core relinquishes this ideal. In 2014, an Elmwood, New York, school cancelled its kindergarten show because, in the superintendent's words, "we are responsible for preparing children for college and careers" (Strauss, 2014). This example caused a local and national uproar, but educators continue to remove progressive elements from the curriculum to accommodate the Common Core. The root of the problem is the standards' focus on a narrow range of testable skills.

What is the alternative to the Common Core? Democrats may take our bearing from Deborah Meier's prescient 2000 book *Will Standards Save Education?* Writing before No Child Left Behind, Meier warned what would happen to the democratic character of education when the most important decisions regarding the curriculum framework were made by distant others.

> *By shifting the locus of authority to outside bodies, it undermines the capacity of schools to instruct by example in the qualities of mind that schools in a democracy should be fostering in kids—responsibility for one's own ideas, tolerance for the ideas of others, and a capacity to negotiate differences. (Meier, 2000, pp. 4–5)*

As the founder of the Central Park East School in East Harlem and the Mission Hill School in Boston, Meier saw the value of articulating education aims, but the formation of the aims must include the people who are responsible for working to reach them. "We invented our own standards, not out of whole cloth but with an eye to what the world out there expects and what we deem valuable and important" (Meier, 2000, p. 21). For Meier, educators, families, and community members, if entrusted with real power, will make or choose high-quality education standards. And in the process of using this power, they will get an education in democracy that will prepare them for other democratic interventions.

For the past few years, I feel like an enemy power has invaded the local school district. As a professor who follows the news, I, like many parents, was blindsided by New York's rollout of the Common Core in 2012. In subsequent years, I learned that the billionaires Bill and Melinda Gates paid Coleman to write the Common Core standards for the Race to the Top program and thus circumvent laws preventing the federal government from influencing curriculum (Layton, 2014). Political and economic elites continue to build an education system upon the foundation of the Common Core standards, despite popular opposition, including in historically disadvantaged communities (Hagopian, 2016). This is not how democratic education works, where the people involved in the education process need to have a meaningful voice. It is time to pull the plug on the Common Core experiment and empower communities to make their own education standards.

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