

## *The Growing Reality About Common Core Implementation*

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Prior to Common Core being released and implemented in grade schools across the U.S., the government and a number of education entities touted the new set of teaching goals as a modern revision of learning. Children raised through the process would be able to adapt to the work world better being taught skills and concepts that prepared them for critical, analytical thinking and college. The same kids would then be able to function better on an ad hoc basis as adults versus relying on traditional rote and memory learning. All of these interesting goals and outcomes were part of the Common Core media push in early 2013.

Fast forward to the first half-year of program implementation in most grade schools today in December 2013, and Common Core seems to be having a number of predicted and unexpected challenges. These include:

Parents questioning the common sense behind some of the Common Core principles and lessons being taught.

Teachers pushing back on their administrations regarding the new workload involved. Schools and teachers finding they can't clearly explain the program even though they are being required to teach children the components of Common Core.

Parental Resistance

Common Core in practice is not going over well with parents. Those who are paying attention are questioning the basic technical approaches of the lessons and how they are supposed to help kids learn. Simple things like how fraction multiplication is performed, or how students are tested without being allowed to study new concepts first are triggering parents' confusion and frustration, which teachers are receiving in multiple forms. Parent resistance to some extent was expected simply because of change, but the level of resistance is continuing to grow as parents realize even teachers don't have a firm grip on what Common Core actually is or provides.

## **Labor Issues**

Teachers filing grievances in response to the Common Core workload are starting to appear more and more. Like most public agencies, schools involve collective bargaining agreements with employees. Where a change in job duties occurs, then they need to be negotiated through labor talks and similar meetings. The Common Core requirements in every state were rolled out as simply changes to education material versus new job duties. However, in practice, teachers and their unions are beginning to argue that the lesson formats are creating far more work, duties, requirements and burdens, which then technically represent a change in the workplace. Ergo the grievances that Common Core is a violation of set labor agreements.

## **Confusing Material**

Common Core standards were generated by a group of academics and professors whom themselves were working predominantly in theory and with very little testing data. In many cases, these same professors last had classroom experience years before they every earned their doctorates. No surprise then, the principles they've come up with in the program can seem ambiguous and theoretical to practicing teacher in a room full of 20 eight-year-olds. Many teachers are puzzled and frantic, trying to explain something to parents and kids that they themselves can't see connecting in practice.

## **In Summary**

Some will argue that the above issues are just growing pains, and many in district level management positions actively tout this position. This is because a number of school districts have received additional federal funding to implement Common Core, so they are not likely to bite the hand that's been feeding them extra financial resources.

However, voices are growing from the outside as well as from teachers who have to figure out how to make things work.

The real test of Common Core and its performance will come at the end of the first year when standardized testing results are collected and compiled. However, it may still take another year or two at least to confirm those results. Until then, teachers, parents and kids are generally along for the ride, wherever Common Core may actually end up bringing folks. Clearly, an ambiguous destination is not the sort of perspective people want to have about grade schedule education, but that is the reality so far today.