

Selections from Bill Evers's Writings on Education

Common Core National Curriculum-Content Standards

“Competitive federalism encourages innovation, allows movement between jurisdictions that enhances liberty, and permits a better match between policies and voter preferences. Common Core’s national uniformity runs counter to competitive federalism. ...

“Unless Common Core is stopped, its officials will dismantle what remains of state and local decision-making on classroom lessons and replace it with a new system of national tests and a national curriculum. This policy is Tocqueville’s nightmare: As in Europe, education ‘has become a national affair’ and Common Core is the vehicle for imposing in America a one-size-fits-all centralization like that administered by the National Ministry of Education in France.”

- Testimony before the Rules & Reference Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives, August 19, 2014

“The Common Core’s designers have taken the existing bureaucracy and increased its centralization and uniformity. By creating the Common Core content standards behind closed doors, the authors increased the alienation of the public from schools as institutions worthy of loyalty. The general public had no voice in creating or adopting the Common Core. ...

“The Common Core’s rules and its curriculum guidance are the governing rules of a cartel. The Common Core’s promoters and their federal facilitators wanted a cartel that would ... shut down the curriculum alternatives that federalism would allow.”

- *Education Week*, January 14, 2015

State-Level Standards & Accountability:

“The most important instrument for encouraging student achievement has in recent years been state-level academic standards and accountability systems based on student test results.”

- “High-Spending, Low-Performing School Districts” (co-authored with Paul Clopton), in *Courting Failure*, ed. E. Hanushek (2006), page 162

Accountability:

“When it comes to government bureaucracies, ‘what gets measured, gets done,’ which is why accountability interest groups have insisted upon establishing high academic standards and measuring achievement against those standards. In this way, the standards movement hopes that accountability systems can do for the public schools at least some of what profit and loss does for commercial businesses by rewarding what works and those who are productive, and sorting out what doesn’t work and those who are not productive.”

- “Standards and Accountability,” in *A Primer on America’s Schools*, ed. T. Moe (2001), page 214

Academic Rigor:

“Standards that are both demanding and explicit are called ‘elitist’ and are therefore [politically] difficult to implement. Nonacademic courses are on the decline, but nonacademic content is being infused into traditionally academic courses.”

- “The Curricular Smorgasbord”(co-authored with Paul Clopton), in *Our Schools, Our Future*, ed. P. Peterson (2003), page 270

Better Incentives in Poorly Performing Districts:

“Do school districts, as presently constituted, have the [proper incentives] to succeed academically with low-performing students?...Unless [districts] have the needed [incentives] for productivity, channeling large amounts of additional money to those districts will not succeed in boosting student achievement.”

- “High-Spending, Low-Performing School Districts” (co-authored with Paul Clopton), in *Courting Failure*, ed. E. Hanushek (2006), page 104

Productivity:

“Americans take great pride in the superior and ever-increasing effectiveness and efficiency of most of our industries. Yet our schools fall behind those in other countries and have become less rather than more efficient, which is far from what we would want, given their central importance in the American economy and society. School productivity or the relation of achievement to cost was 65 percent higher in 1970-71 than in 1998-99. ... After a quarter-century of poor progress in educational productivity, the burden of proof is on the schools rather than on tests per se or on the idea of accountability, and the time for inaugurating high standards and accountability is now.”

- “Introduction and Overview” (co-authored with Herbert J. Walberg), in *School Accountability*, ed. W. Evers & H. Walberg (2002), pages 1, 2, 5

Balancing Skills and Conceptual Understanding:

“Conceptual understanding does not come without the hard work of studying a subject for a long time and in depth. The teacher needs to guide the student throughout. ... If teachers keep these things in mind, they can and should use large components of problem solving and applications in teaching.”

- “From Progressive Education to Discovery Learning,” in *What’s Gone Wrong in America’s Classrooms*, ed. W. Evers (1997), page 20

Balance in Teaching Math:

“[We commend the message of the new standards that] mathematics instruction needs to be balanced. Students today certainly need calculation and symbolic-manipulations skills that go beyond the merely mechanical. They must understand concepts sufficiently well to be able to handle new situations flexibly and confidently, to be able to recognize where mathematics can be applied to problems, and to devise strategies to solve the problems that arise. ... It is no longer an article of faith that such deep understanding can occur even if students lack basic skills.”

- *Education Week*, May 24, 2000 (article co-authored with R. James Milgram)

Educational Heroism:

“...[E]veryone should pay tribute to the heroic efforts of school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and students themselves when ... students in low-performing districts triumph over adversity or when such schools and districts turn themselves around. We call [their] efforts heroic because these teachers and students and others who work with them have succeeded in the midst of poorly designed institutions, perverse incentives, political obfuscation, and the dominance of unscientific teaching practices.”

- “High-Spending, Low-Performing School Districts” (co-authored with Paul Clopton), in *Courting Failure*, ed. E. Hanushek (2006), page 174