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Education Leaders Form Organization to Promote Liberal Education
Concerned that testing policies are driving history, arts, etc. from the classroom

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Feb. 26 A diverse group of teachers, scholars, superintendents, reform advocates, and union leaders expressed concern today that our schools are sacrificing too much in their quest to fulfill their commitments under No Child Left Behind. “The current mania for testing and basic skills has narrowed the curriculum and caused the limiting or exclusion of such subjects as history, literature, civics, geography, science, and the arts,” said New York University research professor Diane Ravitch and Antonia Cortese, Executive Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers.

To combat this problem, Ravitch and Cortese have joined with others to form Common Core, a Washington-based, non-partisan research and advocacy organization devoted to promoting and enhancing liberal arts and sciences education in America’s elementary and secondary schools. Common Core’s basic premise is that every young American needs and deserves a comprehensive, content-rich education.

“We believe that a child who graduates from high school without a broad-based education has in fact been left behind,” said Lynne Munson, Common Core’s executive director. “Only a complete liberal arts and sciences education that includes the arts, history, languages, and science—in addition to reading and math—will enable today’s students to become tomorrow’s well-prepared citizens,” said Munson. Common Core, a nonprofit organization, is dedicated to making immersion in the core academic disciplines the common experience of all schoolchildren.

“The pressures of NCLB have increasingly led to a narrow focus on basic reading and math skills in America’s classrooms. Of course children must know how to read and compute. But children must be knowledgeable in addition to being skilled,” said Munson. The time spent on “endless test-preparation activities,” according to Ravitch and Cortese, “could be better spent reading and discussing exciting historical controversies, scientific discoveries, and literary works.”

Common Core will support parents, educators, and others who are pushing for a broad liberal education for all children. And it will promote programs, policies and initiatives at the local, state, and federal levels that provide students with challenging instruction in literature, mathematics, science, geography, civics and government, history, economics, foreign languages, and the arts.

“Our coalition of educators, scholars, writers, artists, and businesspeople represent the entire political spectrum,” said Munson. In addition to Ravitch and Cortese, Common Core’s board includes:

- Barbara Byrd-Bennett, Executive-in-Residence at Cleveland State University
- Pascal Forgione, Superintendent of the Austin School District in Texas
- Lorraine Griffith, 5th grade teacher at West Buncombe Elementary School in Asheville, NC
- Jason Griffiths, Headmaster of Brooklyn Latin, a public school
- Joy Hakim, author of science and American history textbooks
- Richard Kessler, Executive Director of the Center for Arts Education
- Harvey Klehr, Professor of Politics and History at Emory University
- Juan Rangel, President of UNO Charter School Network with schools in Chicago and New Orleans

Trustees

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LYNNE MUNSON
Executive Director
Common Core

JUAN RANGEL
President
UNO Charter School Network

DIANE RAVITCH
Research Professor of Education
New York University

“Together, we’re working to return exciting, rich, liberal arts instruction to every classroom,” added Munson.

To inaugurate its official launch, Common Core will hold a press conference at the National Press Club, 529 14th Street NW, on Feb. 26, 2008. The event will last from 9:30 am-11:00 am. Speakers will include Prof. Ravitch, Ms. Cortese, Ms. Munson, and Frederick M. Hess, director of education policy at the American Enterprise Institute. Breakfast and refreshments will be served beginning at 9:15 am.

The event is open to the general public. Please direct all media inquiries to Lauren Prehoda at 202-420-1761 or lprehoda@commoncore.org.

To find out more about the ways you can help support broad-based, rigorous education, please visit www.commoncore.org

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