



VIEWPOINT

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Ohio Core Curriculum Caveats

By: Matthew Carr

Summary

The new “Ohio Core” curriculum, which would raise standards for all high school students in the state, is more likely to wreak havoc on Ohio’s schools, and actually turn back any gains that our schools have made in recent years, than it is to improve student preparedness upon graduation.

Main text word count: 500

Governor Taft has decided to champion at least one more initiative before the end of his tenure. Called the “Ohio Core,” this initiative sets out a more rigorous curriculum for Ohio’s high school students. By raising the bar, it is hoped that we can raise the number of high school graduates ready to enter the workforce after graduation.

However, if passed this initiative would wreak havoc on Ohio’s schools and actually turn back any gains that our schools have made in recent years.

The Ohio Core is based on the premise that all students, whether they intend to enter the workforce or enter college, need to be able to work with information and technology in order to earn a living wage in the 21st century economy.

But the facts simply do not support the conclusion that a tougher curriculum leads to students that are better prepared for life after high school.



The “Ohio Core” curriculum would wreak havoc on every public, charter, and private school in the state.

There has only been one empirical study on the effectiveness of higher curriculum standards on student preparedness for entering the workforce after graduation. The study, done by the Educational Testing Service, found that there is no “support for the proposition that those not going to college need to be qualified to enter college credit courses in order to enter the workforce.”

It’s no wonder, really. A rigid, standardized curriculum confuses mandating that every student get a quality education with mandating that everyone get the same education.

A quality education for a student who wants to work in one trade is different from a quality education for a student interested in pursuing another trade, both of which are altogether different from a quality education for a student interested in pursuing a liberal arts degree.

Source: Corbis

A learning environment can be challenging without being standardized, indeed it demands the flexibility to match curriculum with student needs and career path.

It is also curious that our public schools, which have been decrying top-down, one-size-fits-all mandates of every sort for many years, would suddenly support a top-down, one-size-fits-all mandate requiring that every student take the same courses, regardless of interest or ability.

Lastly, every parent in Ohio should be seriously concerned by the fact that this curriculum will be mandated not just for all public schools, but for every charter school and every private school as well.

This initiative will stifle innovation in the way educational services are delivered. It will turn our charter schools into mere facsimiles of the traditional public schools, only with less funding. And it will take away one of the primary reasons that private schools exist, which is to provide an alternative to those who are not served in the public system.

It is absolutely true that our state must take action to combat what President Bush called “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” But the Ohio Core curriculum isn’t more rigorous, it’s just more rigid. And in an economy that is based on flexibility and adaptation, there could hardly be a more seriously flawed approach than this one.

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