

2016-01-01

A Critical Analysis of the Rhetoric of Education Reform in the United States

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
THE RHETORIC OF EDUCATION REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES

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Doctoral Program in Rhetoric and Composition

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Dedication

To my professors and mentors:
Sr. Rosamond Ethier and Sr. Ann Nelson

For I would not have accomplished so much without your guidance and love.

Thank You.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
THE RHETORIC OF EDUCATION REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES

by

MELANIE REBECCA SALOME, B.A., M.A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
May 2016

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the following people for their love and support these past four years. There have been many triumphs and many struggles; I could not have made it without their unwavering support.

My family: my mother, Barbara Salome; my sisters Barbara Salome and Jane Pouliot; my brother Timothy Salome and my cousin Louis Salome.

My dearest friends: Debbie Holderby, Joan Moore, Karen Stith, Cassandra Dulin, Dr. Helen Foster, and Diane McCormick.

I want to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Beth Brunk-Chavez, you have been a joy to work with on this project and such a patient mentor. Dr. Kate Mangelsdorf, thank you for your wonderful guidance and keen insights. Dr. Roberto Avant-Mier, thank you for your superb editing skills.

I owe a special Thank You to Dr. Eric S. Kushner. I most likely would not have moved to the Southwest or even attended The University of Texas at El Paso without his friendship and encouragement.

I also want to pay honorable mention to my departed father, Charles J. Salome Sr., who could not be here to witness my accomplishments. Thank you Dad.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

Horace Mann's six principals of education: 1) Citizens cannot maintain both ignorance and freedom; 2) This education should be paid for, controlled, and maintained by the public; 3) This education should be provided in schools that embrace children from varying backgrounds; 4) This education must be nonsectarian; 5) This education must be taught using tenets of a free society; and 6) This education must be provided by well-trained, professional teachers.

- Biography.com Editors, *Horace Mann Biography*, 2016

As a nation, the United States of America formed its education roots predicated upon the vision of a new and independent country that provided freedom and equality to all its inhabitants. This notion of equality emanated from the “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” mantra found in the nation’s constitution. Public education for all was one such liberty whose seed was planted through the legislature of Massachusetts in the late 1800s. Although schools came into existence not long after Pilgrims landed the Mayflower in 1620, a general public school system was not in place until the Secretary of Education in Massachusetts, Horace Mann, campaigned to implement such a system in 1852. Up to this point, the thirteen colonies provided education to children in various ways, including the one room school house, private tutors, home schooling, and sending children to English boarding schools. Religious sects also played a key role in the development of public education prior to 1852 by establishing their own schools. As a result of the implementation of Mann’s policy notion, 19th century public education became known as the “Common School.”

The Common School mission and purpose was to offer a public education to all children regardless of their social, economic, religious, or ethnic background. The basis of this new school system was to provide a place where all children could come together to learn based on a foundation of practices indicative of a free society. This Common School system marked the beginning of an evolutionary process in public education across the United States. Financial support was garnered through public monies, and decisions about curriculum were based on

current tenets from the German educational system known as the Prussian model. It was Horace Mann who observed the educational methods and then advocated to adopt the Prussian model of teaching and learning in Massachusetts within a structured public education system. Although met with resistance from public officials at the time, what became the Common School paved the way for the beginning of public education that would serve all members of the nation's free society. Almost two centuries later, public education has evolved to where a system known as the Common Core has been created.

The Common Core Standards of today have proclaimed a mission similar to the Common School in that they seek to provide an equal education to all children regardless of societal, ethnic, religious, and economic differences. This notion of equality among all has been transformed into equal opportunity for all as well, with regard to education. The continued transitions in our public education policy appear to have come full circle in terms of goals and objectives. Thus, desired outcome of these transitions, based on the rhetoric examined in this study, is two-fold: to provide a high quality education that prepares students for college and career, and to "compete" more aptly with technologies and intelligence quotients of those in other advanced nations.

Despite the fact that there has been clear support for the Common Core Standards by political leaders in all but seven states, there are many parents, teachers, administrators, and lawmakers who are not as supportive and students are caught in the middle of this public policy tug of war. Since 2009, the implementation of the Common Core has delivered both positive and negative results with regard to student progress. National statistics from the Department of Education on education performance has yielded more positive strides for the Common Core during the first waves of analysis. Nonetheless, the numerous stakeholders involved in the

implementation of such policies find their way to advocate or dissent based on agenda driven factors using various forms of data collection.

In order to dissect the fluctuating landscape of United States education policies, the discourse surrounding this subject must be examined. This analysis provides a way of realizing the impact of this discourse on the social constructs of change within our society. The hegemonic structures that weave the fabric of the United States, wield the power to change policies time and time again. In examining this construction, language and power are at the very core of the evolutionary process known as civilization. The research presented here will examine these key elements within the context of our educational policy system and allow us to unveil the process of transformation through discourse.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to study how the United States arrived at the current education reform policy through the lens of rhetorical analysis, specifically Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In conducting a critical discourse analysis of the speeches of primary figureheads within the policy-making arena, this research exposes the connection between language and power in implementing change in society. An examination of the history of education reform is also necessary to situate the research and analysis that follows. Exploration conducted within this context explicates the historical significance of reform policy rhetoric, along with a scrutiny of rhetoric from current policy makers in the latest education reform implementation known as the Common Core Standards. This inquiry includes a critical discourse analysis of speeches conducted by Bill Gates, President Barak Obama, and dissenters of the policy.

This dissertation explores the rhetoric of education reform from the perspective of both current and historical figures who have impacted education policy in the United States. This study

will prompt responses that uncover the basis for education reform and the historical timeline that has brought us to the Common Core Standards. Overall, this research will provide a better understanding of the past and future of U.S. education reform. This inquiry comes with the awareness that the symbiotic relationship between language and power are the crux of political and social policy changes.

1.2 The Rhetoric of Education Reform

Research suggests that education reform policy has a long and arduous history throughout our society. Since the establishment of free public education in the United States, dating back to the 1800s, the defining and redefining of public education has been a continuous endeavor. Beginning with the days of Horace Mann, Secretary of Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, education laws and policy have been in a state of constant flux. The differing sides of the issue have permeated the public airwaves from the perspectives of policy makers to fact seekers to the uninformed. Other voices who lend credibility to the contention of this policy are teachers, parents, administrators, and students. In investigating the most recent implementation of education reform policy, the major contributors in support of this initiative are Bill Gates and President Obama. Although there are many dissenters, the most publicized dissention of current education reform policy comes from Diane Ravitch, education historian and a former Assistant Secretary of Education. This research will encompass an historical perspective on education reform policy as well as a critical analysis of those major contributors to the conversation on current reform policy. This section provides a look into the education reform discourse of notable authors, researchers, and education leaders.

A range of issues surround education reform policy, and one must be mindful of the vast rhetoric that leads society down differing paths on this subject. There has been both speculation

and hope for the Common Core Standards as being the best chance thus far for the United States to be a leader in education on a global scale. Maria Ferguson (2013), executive director of the Center on Education Policy at George Washington University, expounds the possibilities for country's educational system and touts the Common Core "as the game changer – a reform effort that can accomplish what none other has been able to do" (p. 68). By the same token, Ferguson also recognizes that for this reform to take shape, and hold in a positive direction, four major factors must be successful. Those factors include leadership, communication, resources, and effective teachers/principals/administrators (p. 68-69). In ensuring the success of these factors operating in unison under the Common Core, Ferguson notes that these "key indicators signal whether the standards will stand a chance of taking root across the country" (p. 68). The Common Core Standards policy has not only broached the subject of future possibilities in the nation's educational system, but has prompted many to speak out in opposition to this policy.

When analyzing the rhetoric surrounding education reform, crucial issues such as student inequities with regard to social, economic, and ethnic marginalization are at the forefront of the discourse. The previous policy of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was a spotlight for students who were from lower income families and those coming from high risk urban areas. This reform was intended to "improve student achievement through, among other mechanisms, demanding strict accountability for results of student achievement" (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006, p. 5). However, in implementing a standard of accountability and uniform testing, this approach had a "disparate impact on ethnic minority students in general, and more specifically, on Hispanic students" (p. 5). In the wake of the Latino/Hispanic population being the largest minority population in the country, the performance of these students in reading and math skills has been consistently lower than of their Caucasian counterparts for decades (Casellas & Shelly, 2012). The Latino population in

numerous states across the country had “mobilized in opposition to high-stakes testing requirements of the NCLB, which arguably disadvantage students who do not test well” (p. 262). The standardized testing issue has been and continues to be a matter of contention, particularly when results favor those students who are more socially, economically, and ethnically privileged than others. The testing practices of such educational policies have also been accused of not only marginalizing students, but teachers as well.

In researching the effects of standardized testing in elementary and secondary schools, it has been discovered that teachers, in addition to students, have also felt the repercussions. As stated by Barrett (2009) of the pre-Common Core policy of No Child Left Behind, the “performance model of pedagogic discourse has impacted the professional practices and identities of pre-service and early career teachers” (p. 1018). In homogenizing the education process, teachers have become mechanized to teach in accordance with producing desired testing results. Teacher’s diminishing control over the classroom curriculum has signaled a shift in the role of the teacher toward being administrators of prescribed courses. As noted by Barrett, the course “content is increasingly taught in isolated fragments connected only to standardized examinations in a strongly classified and framed curriculum” (p. 1020). The result is that what teachers have been mandated to teach under the NCLB policy does not offer much flexibility in pedagogical practices.

One of the major arguments in support of transforming the nation’s educational system is that there must be a teacher education program in place that prepares teachers for these new reform policies. Studies showed that there is a high turnover of new teachers after only five years in grades K-12. According to Futrell (2010), “50% of new teachers leave the profession by the time they reach their fifth year in the classroom” (p. 435). The contention is that in an effort to curtail instability in the profession, teacher education programs for the 21st century must be mandated in

order to meet the needs of classroom curriculum. Other areas of improvement in the field surround the ethnic diversity of the classroom student population, which demands that the teaching force also be ethnically diverse. This is particularly evident in the classroom with regard to English Language Learners (ELLs). In a report by the Education Commission of the States (2013), “Many general classroom teachers lack the specific knowledge and skills to bring ELLs to proficiency in the four domains of language acquisition – speaking, listening, reading, and writing” (p. 2). In addition, there is also a lack of subject matter experts teaching the appropriate courses. The most difficult challenge being faced is the ever increasing student population. This increasing population requires that qualified, trained, and committed teachers are a permanent fixture in the classroom. Further, Futrell (2010) notes from a study by Ingersoll (2004), “students in high-poverty schools are 77% more likely than other students to be assigned to an out-of-field teacher” (p. 435). In addition, Futrell contends that in order to provide quality education to all students “schools of education need to be redefined and restructured to reflect the real world of teaching and learning” (p. 436).

In a nation of increasingly conflicting political ideologies, United States education reform policy has often been labeled a catalyst for destructive change. Conflicting ideologies often leave national policies, such as education reform, without a unified direction. With evidence provided by the U.S. Department of Education depicting other countries surpassing United States educational student assessments, some rhetoric suggests that success stories overseas could provide the country with an example by which to learn and implement in the nation’s own system. Yet, despite the financial investment in the United States educational system, policies that do not fulfill the needs of all stakeholders continue to be implemented. Marc Tucker, President of the National Center on Education and the Economy, notes that the United States spends more money

per student for elementary and secondary education than any other country (except Luxembourg) but still continually falls short in student performance than most countries around the globe (2011, p. 23). According to Tucker, one of the profound differences in our educational practices compared with other countries is that of teacher education standards. Based on research conducted by his organization, Tucker posits, the “standards for getting into our teacher colleges are very low. Most teachers are educated in professional schools with very low status in the higher education system” (p. 23). Tucker further contends that in order to see real improvement in the country’s education system, the nation must practice a level of standards that produce high achieving results similar to international competitors. It is Tucker’s contention that in the current policy atmosphere, with the exception of the Common Core Standards, the United States is not making strides toward that higher-standard. As stated by Tucker, “We have done little to ameliorate poverty's effects on student achievement and have a long way to go to match our competitors’ achievements on instructional systems” (p. 23).

Based on a government mandate for increased educational standards, United States politicians have created a competition with global counterparts in an effort to produce superior education assessment results. However, in an economic crisis, as experienced in recent years, the stability of educational reforms wanes in light of funding challenges. In short, state budget cuts hamper progress made in education policy by reducing critical resources. According to Young & Fusarelli (2011), “while state and local school districts confront their budget woes, they are also subject to accountability measures required by NCLB and their respective states” (p. 211). While many students are marginalized during prosperous economic times, they are even more affected during times of financial constraint. The funding challenges affect those who are most vulnerable in the system. As stated by Young & Fusarelli, “children with the greatest needs and fewest

alternatives, at-risk children, may be the most adversely impacted during this fiscal climate” (p. 211). As noted by Richard W. Riley (2002), former Secretary of Education under President Clinton, “an unflinching commitment to excellence and equity must be our guiding principle” (p.706).

In explicating the discourse with regard to education reform policy, the controversies are vast and wide in terms of perceived equity. It is the intention of this research to examine what has brought the United States to the current policy through the discourse by those who have implemented the policy. In addition, this project concludes by analyzing rhetoric contained within the form of both affirming and opposing discourse.

1.3 Methodology

An approach that encompasses the method of critical discourse analysis on education reform will be applied in order to address the research. The methodology implemented in this study will be derived from Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, and James Paul Gee, who focus on language, power, and social change. A definition by Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon is also included to provide expansion within the context of rhetoric and composition.

1.3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

To assess the principles of a critical discourse analysis, a definition must first be made explicit. According to van Dijk (1993), this type of analysis is the “study of the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality, and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships” (p. 249). In analyzing text with a critical eye, a focus must be on “the role of discourse in the reproduction and challenge of dominance” (p. 249). The process of analyzing texts allows for a viewing of social inequalities of a political or social nature that have detrimental effects on culture. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides a window into dominant power

structures that exist in society through communication. In order to examine the connection between discourse and society in terms of hegemony, a scrutiny of the social representations in society and the discourse of those who act on behalf of society must be studied (van Dijk, 1993).

The premise of van Dijk's explication of CDA is that social consciousness is a vital connection between discourse and power. In order for discourse analysis to occur, there needs to be an awareness of the social and political structures that are in place. The analyst must recognize the dominant powers that are in place and examine its repetitions in society. In establishing a mindfulness of such dominance, the analyst can then recognize the abuses of such powers as well. According to van Dijk, "our critical approach prefers to focus on the elites and their discursive strategies for the maintenance of inequality" (p. 250).

Although complications involved in the reproduction of power are vast, the individual actor who produces a speech, for instance, does not simply reproduce social inequality by this act alone. In other words, the conditions from which a speech is accepted or rejected in terms of its legitimacy are dependent upon the context for which the speech was given and all of the environmental factors that contribute to its situatedness. As van Dijk posits, "what is involved in dominance are questionable conditions of legitimacy or acceptability, including what is usually called 'abuse' of power, and especially also possibly negative effects of the exercise of power, namely social inequality" (p. 250). As analysts, an understanding that a single speech act cannot perpetuate the reproduction of power without the proper support and acceptance of the receiver must be realized.

According to Fairclough (2012), discourse is the catalyst for all social change. Fairclough states that all social formations occur because language and power are inextricably connected. In addition, Fairclough posits that discourse analysis is also concerned "with how power relations

and power struggles shape and transform the discourse practices of a society or institution” (p. 36). This definition of critical discourse analysis contends that political and ideological discourse is at the very core of our socially constructed realities. In expounding upon the relevance of political and ideological discourse, Fairclough supports the notion that these discourses are the premise for power relations and power struggles within society. Fairclough notes that “discourse as a political practice establishes, sustains, and changes power relations” (p. 67) and “discourse as an ideological practice constitutes, naturalizes, sustains, and changes significations of the world from diverse positions in power relations” (p. 67). Fairclough goes on further to claim that “different types of discourse in different social domains or institutional settings may come to be politically or ideologically ‘invested’ in particular ways” (p. 67).

In the view of Gee (2002), an analysis of discourse provides the realization that language is always political. Gee contends that in the use of language, people as a society, both create and perpetuate the situated context for which language is used. It is the notion that language use is both the creator and reflection of a society based on situated discourse that fuels Gee’s position on discourse analysis. In elucidating the meaning of situated context through language, Gee posits that “situated meanings don’t simply reside in individual minds; very often they are negotiated between people in and through communicative social interaction” (p. 80).

In furthering Gee’s expansion of situated context, he also highlights the role of cultural models. In Gee’s definition, cultural models “explain why words have the various situated meanings they do and fuel their ability to grow more” (p. 81). In other words, there is a community definition or group definition of the particular situated meanings of words. This notion goes beyond the concept of discourse community and branches into multiple communities in sustaining and transforming a cultural model. This cultural model ultimately produces what is called the

“situated network” (p. 83). The situated network, as described by Gee, is a thread of communication involving social interaction that includes such aspects as semiotics, activity, material, political, and sociocultural (p. 83). In explicating this theory of situated network, critical discourse analysis focuses on the language exercised in this network. Based on Gee’s definition, the ideal discourse analysis would involve asking questions pertaining to these components about how language is used relevant to time and place in both creating meaning and reflecting meaning in a situated context (p. 92).

According to a definition by Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon (2012), they note that “Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach to textual study that aims to explicate abuses of power promoted by those texts, by analyzing linguistic/semiotic details in light of the larger social and political contexts in which those texts circulate” (p. 107). This description of CDA underscores the impact of discourse on the social and political contexts within the academic field of rhetoric and composition. As a result, broaching such subjects as inequality, ethics, higher education, critical pedagogy, news media, and institutional practices within such contexts is unveiled through the CDA (Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon, 2012).

These scholars note that there are several areas of CDA based on distinct principles addressing social problems and the discursive nature of power relations. The conception that discourse shapes ideologies and establishes society and culture is central to critical discourse analysis. The link between text and society is one that is facilitated, which therefore makes discourse a form of social action. These distinct principles are explored not only through the field of rhetoric and composition, but through a variety of disciplines. The rhetorical variables that are used in rhetoric and composition are those that are used in the CDA, such as “attending to purpose, situation, genre, diction, style, and other variables” (Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon, 2012, p.

109). The multidisciplinary nature of CDA allows for an examination of discourse that is extensive in its depth.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used to explore the research questions will consist of (1) Gramsci's conception of hegemony and language, (2) Foucault's idea of discourse and power, and (3) Bourdieu's notion of habitus, language, and power. In elucidating the principles of critical discourse analysis, hegemonic factors weigh heavily in the analysis of both written and spoken dialogue. The connection between discourse and power structures is integral to the dissection of speech using a critical lens. When comprehending the crucial role between discourse and hegemony in our social constructions, we must review the concepts of Gramsci, Bourdieu, and Foucault in order to grasp the magnitude of this association.

1.4.1 Gramsci: Discourse and Hegemony

According to Gramsci, the definition of hegemony, where it "refers to the exercises of indirect power as exemplified in such civil institutions as schools, the legal profession, trade unions, the church, etc." (Landy, p. 53) described two levels of domination that prevail. One level of domination consist of those that are more formal and public (government and police), and other level are those that are indirect through secondary institutions (schools, churches, etc.). The continuous social relations that are predicated by these secondary institutions also produce constant turmoil in an effort to validate predominant conditions. It is within this source of social relations that Gramsci contends that "life is in constant motion" (Landy, p. 53). Gramsci addressed the divisions of classes within society, along with intellectual and subaltern groups. He explicates the awareness that for change to take place within society, the repetition within the very institutions

that are constructed by it must cease. Gramsci makes the distinction that hegemony lies beneath the government dominated surface of society and views it within the power of civil institutions.

In examining the role of hegemony in society, Gramsci contends that language is the primary factor within the social constraints of oppression and inequality. For Gramsci, “the study of language was a study of everyday life” (Landy, p. 50). Because language is the means by which all of society is created and sustained, he found that the study of language was the key to transforming attitudes and behavior within society.

1.4.2 Foucault: Power and Oppression

Foucault sees power as a productive element, as opposed to an oppressive element within society. He alludes to the fact that society is benefitting from the current power structures that are in place, rather than simply being subservient in an oppressed manner. Foucault’s view is that these are what he terms ‘power relations’, rather than oppressive power structures of domination. Foucault contends that “power must be analysed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain...” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). He views these power relations as a stepping stone to his definition of hegemony, whereas it “is a state within society whereby those who are dominated by others take on board the values and ideologies of those in power and accept them as their own” (Mills, p. 75). In accepting the values and ideologies of those with authority, this allows the citizen to be a participant in both the power structure and, if necessary, a participant in the resistance to that power structure. According to Foucault, this concept gives society the ethos required to participate in the sustainability or resistance of these power structures.

Foucault elaborates on this aspect of discourse as the crucial element from which society is created and sustained. He argued that “discourse is both the means of oppressing and the means

of resistance” (Mills, p. 55). For him, the vital element that keeps the wheel of power relations moving is the way in which people create and perceive reality through discourse. With regard to education and discourse, Foucault contends that “any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledge and powers which they carry” (Foucault, as cited in Mills, 2004, p. 61).

1.4.3 Bourdieu: Habitus, Language, and Power

According to Bourdieu, the formation of power structures rests on the amount of cultural capital one possesses. He sees power as a formation of cultural and social constructions. The hegemony that exists is dependent upon our habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus as something that “focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking, and being” (Grenfell, p. 52). Bourdieu expounds on the how “It captures how we carry within us our history, how we bring this history into our present circumstances and how we make choices to act in certain ways and not in others” (Grenfell, p. 52). The habitus is a way to bring together both the subjective and objective aspects of culture by merging our personal experiences and the social structure around us.

In this respect, Bourdieu sees power structures as culturally and symbolically created, which is constantly being legitimized by both agency and societal structure. The formation of what Bourdieu terms as cultural capital, whereas one is educated with knowledge, discriminatory taste, and culture within society, plays a crucial role in how power relations are formed in society (Grenfell, p. 106). Bourdieu sees one’s individual place in society as a result of both our habitus and the cultural capital that we possess. The habitus of an individual may be static to some degree; however, the cultural capital may change over time.

As noted by the works of Gramsci, Foucault, and Bourdieu, the link between language and power in relation to social constructions has been forged to invoke change within society. The

emphasis on change not only lies within the context of discourse and hegemony, but the willing participants of a society to succumb to the rhetorical stance of those who have position and cultural capital within society. We must understand the relevancy and the influence of language on our society as those who possess the social capital to speak in public about the thoughts and actions of an evolutionary civilization that continues to change. In so doing, the American education system carries on its metamorphosis in a continually growing and more diverse population.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of Research

The research presented is derived from existing qualitative and quantitative data relative to teacher and/or student success as it relates to education reform. Examining data from other sources such as government education sites or other scholarly research, provides the most accurate and current data on education reform statistics. Due to the nature of this study, the research does not include any primary qualitative research such as interviews, surveys, or observations.

As a result of the aforementioned, there are inherent limitations within the research that is framed within the context of critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology. The examination of language use is solely conducted through the analysis of speech text. In addition, the theoretical framework is situated within the socially constructed context of language, discourse, power, and hegemony as driving forces of change within society. Both the methodology and the theoretical framework provide a focused and in-depth examination of the rhetoric surrounding education reform.

1.6 Chapter Overview

Chapter One surveys the rhetoric of current education reform policy in America. This leads the way in broaching the various facets of education reform and contentious issues surrounding

the current policy. This chapter includes the introduction of the project, overall research inquiries, limitations of this research, and an overview of each chapter. The research presented will encompass the current rhetoric of education reform policy, along with defining education reform in the process. In addition, this section includes the literature review, methodology, and theoretical framework being used throughout this study.

Chapter Two studies the history of education reform in the United States and discusses the historical significance of the implementation of the public school system in the United States beginning with Horace Mann and the Common School. In disclosing the history of education reform in the United States, an explanation of the policies leading up to the current Common Core Standards and the impact on student/teacher performance will be broached in this chapter. An examination of how history has led the United States to the current policy, along with a description of the Common Core, will be detailed. This section includes a chronology of how the United States arrived at the reform of Common Core Standards (CCS). A detailed overview of the Common Core Standards is explicated as well. In examining the evolution of education policy, graphical data is exhibited as demonstration of the success and/or failure of such policies throughout our history of reform.

Chapter Three provides a detailed analysis of the education reform rhetoric of Bill Gates. Consequently, we will examine Bill Gates' advocacy for education reform, including his philanthropic organization, The (Bill and Melinda) Gates Foundation. We will also take a look at how private enterprise affects American education policy through his example by discovering Gates' role in the implementation of the Common Core Standards. In examining his role in education reform, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is conducted on two major education

reform speeches delivered by Bill Gates relating to discourse and power. The speeches being examined include the following:

- Bill Gates' Speech at the Forum on Education in America, Seattle, Washington, November 11, 2008
- Bill Gates' Speech at Teaching & Learning Conference, Washington D.C., March 14, 2014.

Chapter Four analyzes the education reform rhetoric of the Obama Administration. In this process, we will answer the question of what is President Obama's advocacy for education reform and taking a look at how the federal government's role affects American education policy. This chapter centers on the role of the Obama Administration in education reform with regard to Common Core Standards. In addition, this chapter also studies the Obama Administration's advocacy for education reform policy and how the federal government affects American education policy. A critical discourse analysis is conducted on two major speeches by President Obama in relation to his discourse and power. The speeches being examined include the following:

- President Obama's Speech to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, March 10, 2009
- President Obama's Speech on the Signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act, December 10, 2015

Chapter Five examines what dissenting voices are saying about current education reform. This chapter will answer the queries of why certain states chose not to implement Common Core, and study what these states are doing in its place. In answering these questions, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be conducted on speeches, texts, and commentary delivered by Diane Ravitch and various others who are in opposition to the current education reform policy. Research conducted in this chapter emphasize answering the questions as to why seven states chose not to

implement the Common Core Standards and what they are doing in its place. A focus on discourse by one of the major opponents of current education reform, Diane Ravitch, will be included along with discourse from other opponents of the current policy.

Chapter Five also emphasizes research on the role of private enterprise in implementing future education reforms. Will private enterprise continue to be a driving force in such national policies? In answering this question, I will critique the method by which current education reform policy has been implemented and discuss the future of such policies. This chapter stresses the major findings from the previous chapters' research. In addition, provides an analysis of the research in the form of critique and discloses potential future research on the rhetoric of education reform in America. The topics broached for future research include: how writing literacy is defined under the Common Core Standards, the effects of education reform policy on college freshmen, the concept of students being college-ready, and the future of education reform in America.

In researching the rhetoric of education reform through text speeches of major policy changers, this unveils an examination of how language and power are intricately woven together as a mechanism for social change. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology provides us with a lens from which to delve into the pragmatic (and often essentialized) use of language within the public social and political sphere. We are able to see more clearly the social constructs of change through the use of discourse and power within society and how those changes are produced.

Chapter 2: An Historical Perspective on Education Reform: From the Common School to the Common Core

The United States public education system was instituted upon the belief that each child is entitled to a free, equal, public education put forth by the governing parties within each state and paid for by citizen taxes. Although not explicitly written within constitutional doctrine, the right to a free public education is inscribed within federal and state laws across the country. The United States has seen a multitude of changes to public education, beginning with the Common School of the 19th century, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of the 20th century, and more recently the No Child Left Behind Act and Common Core Standards of the 21st century. This chapter will examine the history of education reform in the United States, explore how history has led the nation to the current policy known as the Common Core Standards, and provide a clear definition of these Common Core Standards. In order to evaluate this current and most predominant public school policy, a review will be conducted of how structured public education began in the United States and what federal and state programs have sought to improve the educational system over the centuries.

2.1 Public Schools: In the Beginning

During the 17th century, shortly after the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts in 1620, religious and community leaders provided the education of children. Religion and morality were the main focus of education during this early puritanical period. In addition, the 1600s brought forth an education system throughout the Massachusetts Bay Colonies by creating such elite institutions as the Boston Latin School in 1635 and Harvard College in 1636 (Sass, 2016, 1635 and 1636 sections). Latin Schools were “designed for sons of certain social classes who are destined for leadership positions in church, state, or the courts” (Sass, 2016, 1635 section). In Virginia, the first free school opened in 1635; however, education was typically taught in the

Southern Colonies by parents or tutors (Sass, 2016, 1635 section). The mandate for public education soon became clear with the Massachusetts Law of 1647. This law, also known as the Old Deluder Satan Act, stipulated that “every town of at least 50 families hire a schoolmaster who would teach the town's children to read and write” (Sass, 2016, 1647 section). In addition, “all towns of at least 100 families should have a Latin grammar school master who will prepare students to attend Harvard College” (Sass, 2016, 1647 section). The advent of these institutions and education declarations prompted the foundation of public education in America. What began to form in 17th century Massachusetts would later transform public education, first in the thirteen colonies and eventually in the fifty states.

During the 18th century a growing sentiment for “the value of literacy, numeracy, and basic knowledge further fueled support for formal education” (Reese, 2005, p. 12). By the 1790s, free charity schools founded by elite philanthropic Protestants catered to the urban poor (p. 11). Notable figures of the period that began speaking in favor of free, tax supported schools included Thaddeus Stevens, a Republican activist from Pennsylvania; Catherine Beecher, an educational advocate for women; Caleb Mills, an evangelical minister and common school advocate; and notable Southerners, who met with fierce opposition (p. 12). Political and societal changes also influenced the trajectory of education during this century, with such events as the American Revolution and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In 1791, the Bill of Rights proclaimed education as being controlled by the individual states (Sass, 2016, 1791 section). Although the words, “education” and “school” are not explicitly mentioned in constitutional documentation, the Tenth Amendment affords that all powers not possessed by the federal government “are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people”; therefore, implying that education is a function of the states (Sass, 2016, 1791 section).

In the early 1800s, Catherine Beecher led the charge for women in the teaching profession; however, through the 1820s, teachers were traditionally local male religious leaders. In 1823, Beecher established the Hartford Female Seminary in Connecticut and applied her pedagogical ideals that paired teaching with the home (Goldstein, 2014, p. 18). Although met with discouragement from parents of these young women, Beecher countered their negativity with the notion that women can be more than wives and mothers – they can “regulate their own mind and be useful to others” (p. 19). She provided her students with a rigorous education consisting of subjects traditionally taught to male students, such as Latin, Greek, algebra, chemistry, modern languages, and political philosophy (p. 18). It was Beecher’s intent to grow the knowledge of females who aspired to be teachers and rival their male counterparts who were already dominating the profession. Beecher continually promoted the profession of teaching as more suited for the female teacher. In order to plead her case for more female teachers, she lectured enthusiastically about her negative views of male teachers. She condemned the male teacher as “incompetent, intemperate, coarse, hard, unfeeling men, too lazy or stupid to be entrusted with children” (p. 20). Beecher’s strong sentiments on the male and female teaching dichotomy eventually prevailed with more female teachers in demand and in service.

Beecher viewed women as “the guardian of the nursery, the companion of childhood, and the constant model of imitation” (p. 18). The female teacher became known as the “mother teacher” – one who nurtures and cares for their students as well as educates them (p. 18). These mother teachers also became known as “missionary teachers” because they would travel from the Northeast to the West in order to educate the “two million ignorant and neglected children” (p. 19). The western part of the country housed deplorable learning conditions in one-room schoolhouses with no heat and no books. Teachers were often housed with families and received

very little in monetary compensation for their work. The number of male teachers began to decline due to these harsh, and often times, unrewarding working conditions.

By the 1830s school enrollment in the northeast was higher than in any other area of the country, and white Americans were among the most literate in the world (Reese, 2005, p. 11). During this period, support for social improvement became more prominent, and as a result, public schools were at the heart of this cause (p. 12). In 1837, Horace Mann helped to establish a state board of education in Massachusetts, which was the first of its kind in the country. The mission of this new state board was to “oversee local schools and require compulsory enrollment for all children” (Goldstein, 2014, p. 24). The high enrollment in schools and the mandate for social improvement prompted a new era of public education during the middle 1800s.

The public education reforms continued through the 19th century with further economic and societal changes. The most notable events of the 1800s included the strengthening of democracy and capitalism, the Civil War, the emancipation of slaves, the industrial revolution, and the migration of settlers to the Western states. All of these events played a role in the changing landscape of the United States as a whole and ultimately the continued evolution of the public education system.

2.2 The Birth of the Common School

By the 1840's, the beginning of organized public school education in America was launched through the efforts of Horace Mann and supporters such as Henry Barnard (Reese, p. 11). Mann, an attorney, congressman, and educational leader of his day, was a prominent figure in both political and social circles in Massachusetts. His advocacy for education reform was grounded by the concept of “free, universal education” (Reese, p. 10). Mann proclaimed the citizens of New England “wanted to perfect the schools and affirm their centrality in shaping the

character, morals, and intelligence of the rising generation” (Reese, p. 10). He believed that “no political structure, however artfully devised, can inherently guarantee the rights and liberties of citizens, for freedom can only be secure as knowledge is widely distributed among the populace” (Cremin, 2013, p. 7). Mann also subscribed to the notion of phrenology – whereby it is believed that “human character can be modified, desirable faculties can be cultivated through exercise, and undesirable ones inhibited through disuse” (Cremin, 2013, p. 13). In addition, Mann’s ideals for the learning environment encompassed practical pedagogical methods in that “the child is to be treated with tenderness and affection, reward rather than punishment should be the propellant of instruction, and meaningful learning rather than rote memorization should be its goal” (Cremin, p. 16). Similar to Beecher’s contention, Mann believed in nurturing the whole child in the classroom, rather than just the intellect.

While learning of the educational systems in Europe, Mann was impressed by the Prussian model being used in Germany (Cremin, 2013, p. 16). The Prussian model consisted of “schoolhouses that were properly laid out, kept in repair, and warmed” as well as local governments providing “furniture, books, and all things necessary for the lessons and exercises” (Goldstein, p. 24). Prussia had also established what was called ‘normal schools’, which provided teacher training to both male and female students between the ages of sixteen and eighteen (Goldstein, p. 24). The student teachers “spent two years studying pedagogy and the subject they would teach and then became an apprentice teacher in a real school in the third year” (Goldstein, p. 25). This structure inspired Mann to advocate for implementing a similar system in Massachusetts.

In Mann’s first report as Secretary of Education, he had proclaimed that “Massachusetts would never get good common schools until public interest could be mobilized and well-trained

teachers could be obtained” (Cremin, p. 17). The state’s resistance to funding such an endeavor in its entirety was controversial, due to the fact that public interest in education continued to grow over time. Although Mann was optimistic and enthusiastic about the characteristics of the Prussian model, the limited funding approved by the Massachusetts Board of Education allowed for him to focus on only two areas: 1) “making sure each district school was equipped with at least a rudimentary library”, and 2) “opening Prussian-style normal schools to train teachers” (Goldstein, p. 25). By 1840, Mann had opened three normal schools in Massachusetts and by 1870, twenty-two other states had followed his lead (Goldstein, p. 25). Unlike the Prussian model, these normal schools were only open to women, because they were cheaper than men for the state to employ (Goldstein, p. 25). These first major reforms initiated by Mann, laid the ground work for a public education system that would spur growth and opportunity across the country.

This new education reform known as the Common School was born out of a largely increasing population, and the demands of society to produce educated and morally upstanding individuals. Notably, the American education system placed a higher value on morality, than it did on intellect, which was contradictory to the European model (Goldstein, p. 28). There were high hopes for the future of its citizens who received an education and they were touted as free of all negative behavior. As quoted by an immigrant in the publication called *A Treatise on American Popular Education* dated 1839, “Give to education a clear field and fair play...your prisons and penitentiaries will lack inmates, and the whole country will be filled with wise, industrious, and happy inhabitants” (Reese, p. 13). While Mann believed that morality was the focal point of education and female teachers the conduit of learning, there was “no public consensus on what American common schooling should look like” (Goldstein, p. 32). Nonetheless, this mandate for an educational system promoting ethical and honorable citizens, did not go unnoticed. The

Common School structure soon became the model throughout, not only Massachusetts and New England, but all of the United States. As such, all through the 19th century, public education remained a morally centered and Christian based institution serving a growing immigrant population from primarily Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish backgrounds.

The education reforms of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries created a foundation for public schooling in America, and like with any new endeavor, success was not guaranteed. The education practices of the 17th century were those set in place by religious leaders. The male dominance of the profession dictated a more structured and disciplined environment from which to learn in an effort to produce ‘good citizens’. In the 18th century there were many changes in both the education system and the economic system due to the increase in population of children from varying religious and ethnic backgrounds. The foundations of a new country, a constitution, and forming a government of checks and balances were all influences on society as a whole, including our education system. The 19th century sought some of the most profound changes in the United States in the midst of a conflict involving the moral merits of slavery and the taking of land from Native American Indians. The 1800’s also became known for the worst and deadliest battle on our soil - the Civil War. We cannot view the education system without considering the environmental effects of political and social events which took place during these periods. All of these external factors and many others, played a role in shaping public education in the centuries ahead.

2.3 Education Reform in the 20th Century

In an effort to build on the focus of our predecessors of the 19th century, education reform which took place during the 20th century sought to address the needs of underserved students from low-income areas of the country. Due to increased diversity in public schools and calls for separation of church and state, focus on morality and Christian based teachings had waned in the

shadows of producing young citizens who would contribute to an industrial economy. In an effort to alleviate the economic inadequacies found in our public schools, the federal government took vital steps to supplement financial support in order to improve the quality of education being administered. As a result, more funding was provided to lower-income school districts across the country and the first step in progress towards administering fair and equitable education had begun, regardless of student socioeconomic status. This time, the funding emanated from the federal government instead of purely from individual state funding initiatives.

In this century, the most crucial and positive step in the federal funding of public education came in 1965 with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The second monumental step in federal support for public education began with the creation of a new branch of government in 1980 called the U.S. Department of Education. These two vital implementations through the federal government paved the way for further changes in public education which would attempt to accommodate both an economy and population that was growing and becoming more diverse alongside the advent of new technologies.

2.3.1 The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)

In April 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The ESEA was intended to provide more educational opportunity for children located in poorer communities across the country. At this point in time, President Johnson was seeking to close the gap on poverty in the United States. The primary purpose of the ESEA was to disperse federal funds to those school districts that were in the greatest need of financial assistance (The ABC's of ESEA, 2016).

Due to the fact that low-income areas do not produce enough property tax money to substantially support the schools in these communities, the ESEA was created to ensure that

economically deprived school systems received supplemental funding as necessary. The intention of this federal policy was to guarantee that low-income schools provide the same quality education as those schools in more affluent segments of the community. This new funding initiative also allowed for more accountability in the public school systems by requiring the administration of sporadic testing in the public schools (4th grade, 8th grade, and 12th grade) to determine student performance and determine whether they were meeting set goals in learning. Since its initial passage, ESEA has been reauthorized eight times and remains the largest source of federal funding for elementary and secondary education in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The latest reauthorizations of this education funding program are known as the No Child Left Behind policy of 2002 and most recently the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015.

2.3.2 The U.S. Department of Education (1980)

Beginning in 1953, education affairs became part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare branch of government (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). On October 17, 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed into law the establishment of a new federal cabinet of government known as the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This separation allowed for other cabinet departments of government to be relieved of any education related programs, which would be transferred to the new Department of Education. The intention of this separate entity of government was to provide a dedicated staff to focus solely on monitoring, funding, and improving education programs in our country. The new department became officially active in May, 1980 and has since become a vital component of our government structure (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE), in conjunction with several organizations that gather education statistics, has continually provided a window through which to see the

measurement of success within elementary and secondary public schools. A primary role of this cabinet of government has been to report and monitor the performance of students over a period of years given a set of determined factors, such as race, gender, and ethnicity. This department also provides information on student loans, including how to apply and how to manage repayment of loans. In addition, the Department makes available information that describes education grant opportunities and how to apply for them. Lastly, the DOE holds historical documentation on education laws and current education legislation for those who may seek out this information. All of the performance measurement data, historical documents, grant information, and loan information is available on the DOE's website.

2.3.3 A Nation at Risk (1983)

During the 1980's, the Reagan Administration's primary focus was on reducing government and its involvement in state run affairs, including our nation's education system. In fact, President Reagan had promised to eliminate the Department of Education altogether, which was just formed a year prior to his taking office in 1981. In an effort to assess the status of our nation's education system, a team of 18 people consisting of private sector, government, and education members were commissioned by the President and appointed by then Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell (U.S. Department of Education, 1983b). In 1983, a report called *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (see appendix B), presented a startling image of our nations' public education system. There were many criticisms emanating from this report, and it provided a harsh look at the state of our education standing compared to other countries. At the time, the report was considered a landmark representation of the American school system, in that it affirmed wide- ranging belief that our schools were failing. It was also the catalyst that prompted a wave of education reforms on all levels of government.

The report focused on five main areas that were considered substandard and required “urgent” improvement. Those areas were: 1) curriculum content, 2) standards and expectations, 3) time, 4) teaching, and 5) leadership and fiscal support (U.S. Department of Education, 1983b). Some of the major criticisms pointed to the lack of skilled teachers in English, math, and science fields, student time not being spent wisely throughout the school day, the school day and/or school year being too short compared to other industrialized nations, and that curriculum is not rigorous enough and does not enforce measurable standards (U.S. Department of Education, 1983b). Consequently, these highlighted inadequacies quickly gained national prominence in the wake of its direct assault on the current and future state of United States education.

The language stated in the report was noticeably direct in its denigration of the United States education system. The punitive arguments presented in the description of the future of education in the United States was a major factor in the motivation of school systems around the country taking action to improve their position. The opening of the report, pointed to the education system being in such peril that “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war” (U.S. Department of Education, 1983b). Additionally, the statement went on to condemn the current condition of education and the nation’s neglect by stating: “we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains [in student achievement] possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament” (U.S. Department of Education, 1983b). The commission goes on to scold the nation for an education system that is “presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (U.S. Department of Education, 1983b).

2.3.4 Improving America's Schools Act (1994)

As a major part of the Clinton Administration's effort to reform education, the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 was the sixth revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Funding provisions provided by this act included those for charter schools, safe and drug-free school zones, increases for bilingual and immigrant education, promoting equity, technology in schools, professional development initiatives, and more support for Native American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Native Alaskan education.

This Act touched upon many of the key education pitfalls of the 1990s and attempted to ameliorate the educational experience for many marginalized and underrepresented students. Grant funding through this program was set up so that 75 percent of the funds would be allocated to "serving the schools with the greatest number of poor students" (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Funding provided to schools for professional development of teachers, administrators, and policymakers were to allocate 80 percent of the funding for teacher development (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). In addition, an appropriation of \$250,000,000 was made for professional development specifically in the math and science fields (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). During this period, the culmination of guidelines and revisions to this original law was the most abundant since it was initialized in 1965; however, the greatest controversial modifications to this law were still to come in the century ahead.

2.3.5 Measurements Used to Advocate Education Reform in the 20th Century

One of the responsibilities of the federal Department of Education is to monitor the health of the public education system across the country. As such, data collection relating to the progress and achievement of students in elementary and secondary schools has been a continuing practice for the federal government. Throughout the 20th century, there have been numerous reports on the

status of student achievement. This data was usually collected over several years and tallied using set criteria and characteristics of the students including their daily practices while attending school.

A report from 1994 (Figure 2.1 below), when data was collected between the years 1978 and 1992, demonstrates that student proficiency in mathematics at the 4th grade, 8th grade and 12th grade levels remained relatively stagnant within each age group. Consistent trends with regard to race and ethnicity showed that white students were steadily ahead of their fellow students who were Black or Hispanic in the same year. The male/female disparity was not as significant, and the male students were only slightly ahead of their female classmates (less than five points). On a scale ranging from 0 to 500, the levels of proficiency in mathematics were defined as follows from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (1994a):

- 150 level performance – Students know some basic addition and subtraction facts, and most can add two-digit numbers without regrouping. They recognize simple situations in which addition and subtraction apply.
- 200 level performance - Students have considerable understanding of two-digit numbers and know some basic multiplication and division facts.
- 250 level performance – Students have an initial understanding of the four basic operations. They can also compare information from graphs and charts, and are developing an ability to analyze simple logical relations.
- 300 level performance – Students can compute decimals, simple fractions, and percents. They can identify geometric figures, measure lengths and angles, and calculate areas of rectangles. They are developing the skills to operate with signed numbers, exponents, and square roots.
- 350 level performance – Students can apply a range of reasoning skills to solve multi-step problems. They can solve routine problems involving fractions and percents, recognize properties of basic geometric figures, and work with exponents and square roots.

Selected characteristics of students	9-year-olds					13-year-olds					17-year-olds\1\				
	1978	1982	1986	1990	1992	1978	1982	1986	1990	1992	1978	1982	1986	1990	1992
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
All students ...	218.6	219.0	221.7	229.6	229.6	264.1	268.6	269.0	270.4	273.1	300.4	298.5	302.0	304.6	306.7
Sex															
Male	217.4	217.1	221.7	229.1	230.8	263.6	269.2	270.0	271.2	274.1	303.8	301.5	304.7	306.3	308.9
Female	219.9	220.8	221.7	230.2	228.4	264.7	268.0	267.9	269.6	272.0	297.1	295.6	299.4	302.9	304.5
Race/ethnicity															
White	224.1	224.0	226.9	235.2	235.1	271.6	274.4	273.6	276.3	278.9	305.9	303.7	307.5	309.5	311.9
Black	192.4	194.9	201.6	208.4	208.0	229.6	240.4	249.2	249.1	250.2	268.4	271.8	278.6	288.5	285.8
Hispanic	202.9	204.0	205.4	213.8	211.9	238.0	252.4	254.3	254.6	259.3	276.3	276.7	283.1	283.5	292.2

Figure 2.1: Average mathematics proficiency, by age, sex, and race/ethnicity of students: 1978 to 1992
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1994a

In this table, White students in 12th grade (the 17-year-olds) barely reached above the 300 level scale, while Black and Hispanic students fell short of that mark by a considerable amount (20 to 30 points). In fact, Black and Hispanic students were consistently behind White students in the 20 to 30 point range during their 4th grade and 8th grade attendance. Up to this point, the data has shown us that the programs implemented by the federal government have been consistent with their quest for improved performance by minorities, low-income, and second language learning students; however, the gains in outcome have been less than desirable.

Additional statistics during this period for reading and writing show there are very similar patterns in terms of White students achieving higher than Black and Hispanic students. In addition, the margin for improvement from one year to the next remains minimal and sometimes stagnant for the same age/grade group. The earliest data collected from the U.S. Department of Education began in 1971. As such, Figures 2.2 and 2.3 below indicate student results for reading proficiency from 1971 to 1992 and writing proficiency from 1984 to 1992, respectively. In Table 2, the reading proficiency scores were based on a scale of 0 to 500 with the following criteria at each level (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1994b):

- A score of 300 implies an ability to find, understand, summarize, and explain relatively complicated literary and informational material.
- A score of 250 implies an ability to search for specific information, interrelate ideas, and make generalizations about literature, science, and social studies materials.
- A score of 200 implies an ability to understand, combine ideas, and make inferences based on short uncomplicated passages about specific or sequentially related information.
- A score of 150 implies an ability to follow brief written directions and carry out simple, discrete reading tasks.

Selected characteristics of students	9-year-olds						13-year-olds						17-year-olds\1\					
	1971	1980	1984	1988	1990	1992	1971	1980	1984	1988	1990	1992	1971	1980	1984	1988	1990	1992
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Total	207.6	215.0	210.9	211.8	209.2	210.5	255.2	258.5	257.1	257.5	256.8	259.8	285.2	285.5	288.8	290.1	290.2	289.7
Sex																		
Male	201.2	210.0	207.5	207.5	204.0	205.9	249.6	254.3	252.6	251.8	250.5	254.1	278.9	281.8	283.8	286.0	284.0	284.2
Female	213.9	220.1	214.2	216.3	214.5	215.4	260.8	262.6	261.7	263.0	263.1	265.3	291.3	289.2	293.9	293.8	296.5	295.7
Race/ethnicity																		
White	214.0	221.3	218.2	217.7	217.0	217.9	260.9	264.4	262.6	261.3	262.3	266.4	291.4	292.8	295.2	294.7	296.6	297.4
Black	170.1	189.3	185.7	188.5	181.8	184.5	222.4	232.8	236.3	242.9	241.5	237.6	238.7	243.1	264.3	274.4	267.3	260.6
Hispanic	(\2\)	190.2	187.2	193.7	189.4	191.7	(\2\)	237.2	239.6	240.1	237.8	239.2	(\2\)	261.4	268.1	270.8	274.8	271.2

Figure 2.2: Average student proficiency in reading, by age, sex, and race/ethnicity of students: 1971 to 1992

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1994a

In Figure 2.3, the writing proficiency scores were based on a scale that ranges from 0 to 500 and were defined as the average of a respondent's estimated scores on specific writing tasks (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1994c). In examining these results, the range of improvement over time is very slight (less than five points) or in some cases it declined (11th graders).

Selected characteristics of students	4th graders				8th graders				11th graders			
	1984	1988	1990	1992	1984	1988	1990	1992	1984	1988	1990	1992
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
All students	203.8	205.7	201.7	207.1	266.7	263.7	256.6	274.4	289.7	291.3	287.1	287.3
Sex												
Male	200.5	199.0	195.0	198.3	257.5	253.7	245.6	263.6	281.1	282.2	276.4	279.4
Female	207.6	212.6	208.7	216.1	276.2	273.5	267.9	285.0	298.6	299.3	298.2	296.4
Race/ethnicity												
White	210.7	214.9	211.0	216.7	271.7	269.1	262.1	279.2	296.8	296.2	292.8	294.1
Black	181.6	173.3	171.4	175.0	247.1	246.0	239.0	258.1	270.3	275.2	268.2	263.2
Hispanic	188.5	190.3	184.1	189.4	246.9	250.4	245.7	265.0	259.1	273.8	276.9	273.6

Figure 2.3: Average writing performance of 4th, 8th, and 11th graders, by sex and race/ethnicity of students: 1984 to 1992

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1994c

The trail of major policies, reports, and funding initiatives that were implemented on education in the 20th century reveals several common themes throughout this discourse. One such theme is the necessity of supplemental funding for underserved and marginalized students, such as those who were socioeconomically disadvantaged. In addition, the need for improved teacher education and professional development, along with a mandate for higher standards of

measurement for student performance in order to increase United States competitiveness on a global scale. Despite the efforts of these policies and reports to stimulate significant change in the overall success of students' learning, the statistical outcomes throughout the latter 1900s reflected little gain in terms of improvement. As a result of this discourse, the 21st century would see the most significant changes in classrooms yet, along with the most controversial.

2.4 Education Reform in the 21st Century

In advancing the call for further education reform, the Bush Administration, beginning in the year 2000, began a push for more accountability in public schools. The education discourse in the previous century had depicted a grim future for the United States public education system and the call for continued reforms still resonated through the 2000s. Continual advancements in technology leading to increased global competition and a steadily increasing immigrant population, according to contemporary education discourse, mandated a clear and viable solution to the reported declining education standards in the United States.

Consequently, the 21st century began with a controversial policy implementation that would remain in effect through 2015. The No Child Left Behind Act, which was predicated upon the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, brought about one of the most divisive debates on education reform with regard to testing, accountability, and assessment. Several years after the application of this policy, another major reform called the Common Core Standards produced even more debate with regard to student performance, testing, and assessment measurement. The continued advances in technology, low college completion rates, and perceived decline in education ranking among other nations, paved the way for large-scale changes that have taken place in the first half of the 21st century.

2.4.1 No Child Left Behind (2002)

During the beginning of the Bush presidency, a drive for increased measurement assessment in grades K-12 was being sponsored and, as a result, a policy known as No Child Left Behind was realized in 2002. This led the way for more federal control over public education policy and the beginning of strict contingency funding based on performance assessments. The implication of this new policy was that marginalized and minority students were being “left behind” due to lack of school accountability in individual student growth. Additionally, education leaders had growing concern for the lack of improved public school performance each year, which created a collective initiative for more evaluative testing at an earlier learning level beginning in third grade.

With this new accountability policy, the federal government decided to require that states annually test student proficiencies in reading, mathematics, and science from grades three through 12. This type of testing applied pressure on states to produce report results for “lower-income students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and major racial and ethnic groups” in exchange for receiving federal funding (Klein, 2015). As a result of frequent assessment testing, the schools were required to report their findings to the federal government for evaluation of “adequate yearly progress” (Klein, 2015). If sufficient progress was not consistently being made in school districts over a two-year period, then schools were required to move students to better-performing schools in the same district (Klein, 2015). The ultimate consequence for continuously low-performing school districts was the possible shutdown of those schools (Klein, 2015). States were also required to employ highly qualified teachers for all students (Klein, 2015). The federal government wanted to ensure that schools would make the necessary changes required in order to increase the quality of education standards across all school districts. These requirements initiated the most controversies for this policy. Although these policy procedures were not a requirement

for schools, they risked losing basic federal funding as part of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. This was an attempt by the federal government to apply pressure to school districts by applying stricter standards in order to receive federal funds. Because most public school systems around the country depend on federal funding for their daily operations, they were essentially forced to comply with these new policies.

The No Child Left Behind policy soon fell under constant scrutiny from students, parents, teachers, and administrators for actually marginalizing students and school districts based on these strict “one size fits all” requirements. The criticisms continued with dissenters focusing on the inequality of such frequent standardized testing. Schools found that they were teaching to the tests in order to preserve their federal funding. Some schools even went so far as to provide false student performance statistics in order to receive their funding. Consequently, public schools found the pressure for performance based funding in this manner became too great and they were calling for change once again.

Although the Obama Administration offered an amendment of this policy to congress in 2010 under the title “A Blueprint for Education,” it was not met with widespread approval. Subsequently, President Obama was able to implement an NCLB waiver program in 2011, which enabled states to be relieved of the major mandates of the policy “in exchange for embracing his education redesign priorities” (Klein, 2015). This was the first step in what was to be the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2015 by the Obama Administration.

2.4.2 Race to the Top (2009)

The Race to the Top education funding initiative was implemented in 2009 by the Obama Administration. The program allocated \$4.35 billion dollars toward grants for state and local

public schools which demonstrated innovation and high achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This program was not part of the ESEA law originating in 1965; rather, President Obama enacted this policy under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* in order to promote a more competitive education system against global counterparts. The federal government would allocate funds to those schools which demonstrated marked improvement in assessment outcomes.

One of the conditions for receiving funding was that the state or local schools implement a set of core standards for achievement in the classroom. Although, the requirement to implement specifically the Common Core Standards was not mandatory, a state had to provide evidence of the application of core standards in their curriculum. Other criteria for funding included performance-based evaluation assessments of teachers and principals. By linking this funding program to “common standards,” the federal government was hoping to, once again, ensure that school districts would adopt a standardized curriculum in order to receive the federal education monies.

2.4.3 Common Core Standards (2009)

2.4.3.1 What are the Common Core Standards?

The Common Core Standards is “a set of clear college- and career-ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics” (Common Core State Standards, 2014). The standards were formulated beginning in 2007 through meetings of governors and state commissioners of education from 48 states (Common Core State Standards, 2014). Specifically, the primary organizations responsible for initiating the creation of these standards are the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Common Core State Standards, 2014). The

Common Core State Standards website makes a distinct point of noting that the federal government was not involved in the creation of these standards and that the burden of ownership rests solely with the 48 states involved (Common Core State Standards, 2014).

Based on disappointing results from the No Child Left Behind initiative, these standards were designed by the participating states and their education representatives in order to establish clear and distinct guidelines for student achievement and learning in grades K-12. The standards are specifically focused on the subjects of English language arts and mathematics, whereby students are given a set of “clear and consistent learning goals to help prepare students for college, career, and life” (Common Core State Standards, 2014). The breakdown by grade is as follows: “For grades K-8, grade-by-grade standards exist in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. For grades 9-12, the standards are grouped into grade bands of 9-10 grade standards and 11-12 grade standards” (Common Core State Standards, 2014). The major subject areas under English language arts & literacy for all grades K-12 include reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills (Common Core State Standards, 2014). In addition to writing, the subject areas for grades 6-12 include history/social studies, science and technical subjects (Common Core State Standards, 2014). The standards focus on improving what is labeled as student critical thinking and reasoning skills. As noted on the Common Core Standards initiative documentation (2014), it describes the standards for English language arts & literacy as follows:

The Common Core asks students to read stories and literature, as well as more complex texts that provide facts and background knowledge in areas such as science and social studies. Students will be challenged and asked questions that push them to refer back to what they’ve read. This stresses critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills

that are required for success in college, career, and life (Common Core State Standards, 2014).

The mathematics standards description reads as follows:

The Common Core concentrates on a clear set of math skills and concepts. Students will learn concepts in a more organized way both during the school year and across grades. The standards encourage students to solve real-world problems (Common Core State Standards, 2014).

The emphasis of these statements focus on “real-world problems” along with “success in college, career, and life.” These descriptions are meant to emphasize the relevancy for preparing students for college and/or career. Since this mantra has been consistent through decades of political administrations, underscoring this aspect of the standards is an essential selling point when dissenters are advocating for removal of these standards.

2.4.3.2 What measurements were used to determine the need for Common Core Standards?

The measurements used in order to justify a need for standardized curriculum were both qualitative and quantitative. The continued dissatisfaction of the No Child Left Behind policy paved the way for new ideas on education reform in the United States. There were many reported government statistics between the years 2000 and 2009 for teaching and learning that presented a dismal picture for the future of public education. Some of these reports included those from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the data-tracking arm of the U.S. Department of Education, in addition to college testing reporting organizations.

In evaluating the data prior to the Common Core Standards implementation, evidence suggests the validation of continued education reform. Although it was clear that the health of public schools and student performance was improving overall, competitiveness with other

nations appeared to be lagging behind. Additionally, minority student proficiencies were either stagnant, showed very little improvement, or in some cases declined. Consequently, education leaders from 48 states convened and set out to implement a plan that would set clear, consistent standards and goals in the K-12 classrooms in all states with the intention of improving overall student proficiency and performance.

The data derived from the U.S. Department of Education on student reading proficiency shows there was a considerable increase (greater than five points) from the year 2000 (213) to 2007 (221) in the All Students category for 4th grade. The results are from a scale of 0 to 500 points, where 500 is the highest level of proficiency. In a detailed look at the breakdown by grades and race/ethnicity, there was a multitude of disparities. What remained consistent was both Black and Hispanic students were 20 to 30+ points behind their White classmates in each grade. The largest gap recorded was for the 4th grade in 2000 where White students scored 224 overall and both Black and Hispanic students scored 190 overall, for a difference of 34 points. In reviewing proficiencies for American Indian/Alaskan Natives, the overall scores actually decreased over time in the 4th grade category with 214 in 2000 and then 203 in 2007. In the 8th grade, there was also a noticeable decrease in these scores where they went from 250 in 2002 to 247 in 2007. The Asian/Pacific Islander students, on the contrary, managed to score closer to the numbers of White students. In 4th grade, the Asian/Pacific Islander students had an overall score of 225 in 2000 and then 232 in 2007, with a resulting gain of seven points over time. The table below depicts this data.

Grade, race/ethnicity, and percentile	2000	2002	2003	2005			2007		
				Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
All students									
4th grade	213 (1.3)	219 (0.4)	218 (0.3)	219 (0.2)	216 (0.2)	222 (0.3)	221 (0.3)	218 (0.3)	224 (0.3)
8th grade	— (†)	264 (0.4)	263 (0.3)	262 (0.2)	257 (0.2)	267 (0.2)	263 (0.2)	258 (0.3)	268 (0.3)
12th grade	— (†)	287 (0.7)	— (†)	286 (0.6)	279 (0.8)	292 (0.7)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)
Race/ethnicity									
4th grade									
White	224 (1.1)	229 (0.3)	229 (0.2)	229 (0.2)	226 (0.3)	232 (0.3)	231 (0.2)	228 (0.3)	234 (0.3)
Black	190 (1.8)	199 (0.5)	198 (0.4)	200 (0.3)	195 (0.4)	205 (0.5)	203 (0.4)	199 (0.5)	208 (0.5)
Hispanic	190 (2.9)	201 (1.3)	200 (0.6)	203 (0.5)	200 (0.5)	205 (0.6)	205 (0.5)	202 (0.6)	208 (0.5)
Asian/Pacific Islander	225 (5.2)	224 (1.6)	226 (1.2)	229 (0.7)	225 (1.0)	232 (0.8)	232 (1.0)	228 (1.1)	236 (1.1)
American Indian/Alaska Native	214 (6.0)	207 (2.0)	202 (1.4)	204 (1.3)	199 (1.4)	209 (1.6)	203 (1.2)	200 (1.5)	206 (1.5)
8th grade									
White	— (†)	272 (0.4)	272 (0.2)	271 (0.2)	266 (0.2)	277 (0.2)	272 (0.2)	267 (0.3)	277 (0.3)
Black	— (†)	245 (0.7)	244 (0.5)	243 (0.4)	237 (0.5)	249 (0.5)	245 (0.4)	238 (0.5)	251 (0.5)
Hispanic	— (†)	247 (0.8)	245 (0.7)	246 (0.4)	242 (0.5)	251 (0.5)	247 (0.4)	242 (0.6)	251 (0.6)
Asian/Pacific Islander	— (†)	267 (1.7)	270 (1.1)	271 (0.8)	266 (1.0)	275 (1.0)	271 (1.1)	266 (1.3)	275 (1.4)
American Indian/Alaska Native	— (†)	250 (3.5)	246 (3.0)	249 (1.4)	244 (1.9)	254 (1.7)	247 (1.2)	242 (1.5)	253 (1.5)
12th grade									
White	— (†)	292 (0.7)	— (†)	293 (0.7)	285 (1.0)	300 (0.7)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)
Black	— (†)	267 (1.3)	— (†)	267 (1.2)	261 (1.7)	272 (1.6)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)
Hispanic	— (†)	273 (1.5)	— (†)	272 (1.2)	266 (1.7)	277 (1.7)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)
Asian/Pacific Islander	— (†)	286 (2.0)	— (†)	287 (1.9)	282 (2.8)	292 (2.3)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)
American Indian/Alaska Native	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)	279 (6.3)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)	— (†)

Figure 2.4: Average reading scale score, by sex, grade, race/ethnicity, and percentile: 2000 through 2007
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008

Based on statistics gathered from the U.S. Department of Education in connection with international literacy testing organizations, America falls below many other advanced nations when looking at adult literacy in the United States. Most European and Asian countries are ahead of the United States in the overall ranking as a nation. A compilation of results from adult literacy surveys, such as the International Adult Literacy Survey, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, and the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, provide a range of rankings that show the United States significantly falling behind other countries over time in assessing adults age 16 to 65. The Figure below depicts these findings from all three program assessments:

IALS (1994–1998)			ALL (2003–2008)			PIAAC (2012)		
Country	Scale score	S.E.	Country	Scale score	S.E.	Country	Scale score	S.E.
Norway	294 *	(1.1)	Norway	295 *	(0.8)	Netherlands	284	(0.7)
Netherlands	286	(0.9)	Netherlands	281 *	(1.0)	Australia	280	(0.9)
Canada	279 *	(2.7)	Canada	280 *	(0.7)	Norway	278	(0.6)
United States	273 *	(1.4)	Australia	277 *	(0.7)	Canada	273	(0.6)
Australia	272 *	(1.0)	United States	268	(1.4)	United States	270	(1.0)
Italy	243 *	(1.9)	Italy	226 *	(1.7)	Italy	250	(1.1)

	Score is significantly higher than the U.S. average score
	Score is not significantly different from the U.S. average score
	Score is significantly lower than the U.S. average score

* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from PIAAC (2012).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Statistics Canada and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), 1994–98, Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL), 2003–08, Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), 2012.

Figure 2.5: Average scores on the IALS, ALL, and PIAAC literacy scales for adults age 16 to 65, by country: 1994–2012
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2013

As a result of these assessments and other statistical discourse on student and adult proficiency, not only was the federal government keen on continuing education reforms, but the most powerful private philanthropic organization in the world was also advocating for dramatic changes. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and its team of education experts prepared the case for improved standards within the public education system. The Gates Foundation states it is in support of a school system that will grow the talent of both student and teacher (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016b). The Foundation notes that because we are in a global world and changes are constant, we must give our students the support they need to succeed in both college and career. The Foundation advocates that they know what students need to satisfy their education experience:

...our students need to learn in and out of school, in person and online, together and independently. Students need learning experiences that meet them where they are, engage them deeply, let them progress at a pace that meets their individual needs, and helps them master the skills for today and tomorrow (Raikes, 2013).

The Gates Foundation began its education initiatives and measurements gathering by targeting various schools around the country. In order to gain a clear representation of what was taking place in schools around the country, Gates conducted pilot studies in school districts of Boston, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Houston (Gates, 2008). For example, the Gates Foundation boasts their support for schools in Seattle with effective programs for teachers and administrators. The Foundation contends that they “support efforts to ensure there is a great teacher in every classroom, that every teacher gets the support they need to do their best teaching, and that there are strong instructional leaders in early learning settings and K-12 schools” (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015a).

2.4.3.3 What does it mean to be college-ready?

The term “college-ready” has been a phrase frequently used in conjunction with the implementation of the Common Core Standards. It is also a phrase that is seen and heard frequently as expressed by Bill Gates, the Gates Foundation, the Obama Administration and creators of the Common Core Standards. In order to better understand this term, it is necessary to examine definitions provided by organizations that played a role in advocating for reform efforts and reporting on the state of college readiness in the United States.

The meanings of this expression provided by some education support organizations are very similar in their wording. In a description provided by The Office of the State Superintendent of Education in Washington, D.C., it is specific in naming the skills needed to be successful in a postsecondary setting:

A College Ready student is an academically prepared student, ready for postsecondary education or training without the need for remedial coursework. Whether you are pursuing a four-year degree or studying for a skilled trade license, being ready means having the

reading, writing, mathematics, social, and cognitive skills to qualify for and succeed in the academic program of your choice (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, n.d.).

In a definition given by the independent, non-profit, education reform organization Achieve, it is similar to the previously stated description; however, it emphasizes that students must be ready for “any” postsecondary education or training. They both state that students must succeed “without the need for remedial coursework.” Achieve provides the following definition:

College today means much more than just pursuing a four-year degree at a university. Being "college-ready" means being prepared for any postsecondary education or training experience, including study at two- and four-year institutions leading to a postsecondary credential (i.e. a certificate, license, Associates or Bachelor's degree). Being ready for college means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses without the need for remedial coursework (What is College- and Career-Ready?, 2009).

In a research study conducted in 2012 by American College Testing (ACT), high school students were assessed based on their ability to be college ready. A definition by ACT on what it means to be college ready was provided for the purpose of their study, which reads:

ACT has long defined college and career readiness as the acquisition of the knowledge and skills a student needs to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing first-year courses at a postsecondary institution (such as a 2- or 4-year college, trade school, or technical school) without the need for remediation (The Condition of College and Career Readiness, 2012).

There is a common requirement for college readiness in all three definitions in which students must be ready “without the need for remediation.” The ACT report also provides a definition of how they assess college readiness in terms of the following:

Empirically derived, ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks are the minimum scores needed on the ACT subject area tests to indicate a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses (The Condition of College and Career Readiness, 2012).

The ACT report appeared to depict a telling story with regard to college readiness among high school students for specific subject areas. The results showed the following disparity where the highest percentage reached for a subject area was 67% in English, with only a total of 25% deemed college-ready in all four subject areas. The full breakdown of results is as follows:

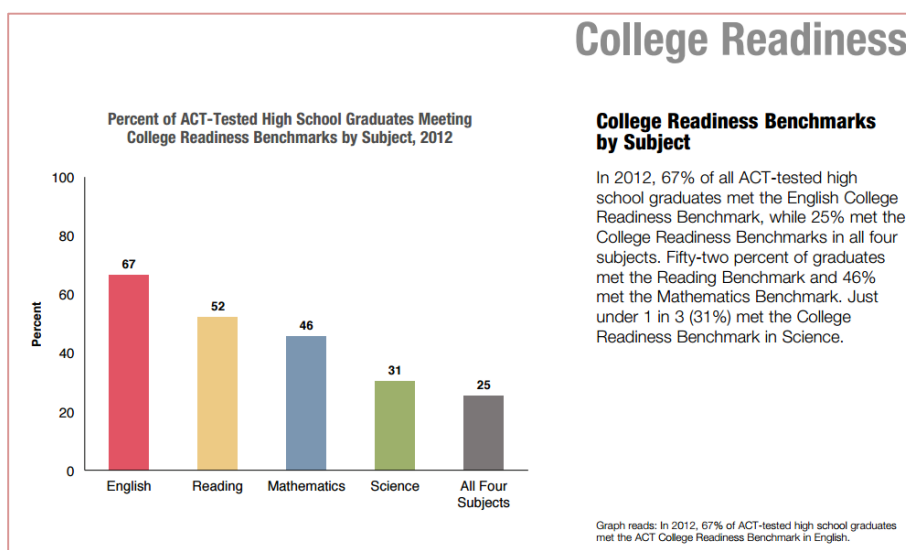


Figure 2.6: ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject Area for 2012

Source: <http://media.act.org/documents/CCCR12-NationalReadinessRpt.pdf>

In an effort to alleviate the apparent college-ready student crisis in the United States, the Common Core has been touted by many as the pathway to prepare students for college and career. This discourse supports that by providing students with a higher standard of learning and supporting teachers with an increased standard of teaching, it is believed that every high school student can be ready for college and beyond. The Gates Foundation notes that “Only 25 percent of U.S. public high school graduates have the skills needed to succeed academically in college, which is an important gateway to economic opportunity in the United States” (The Bill and

Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015b). Gates also stresses that teachers have traditionally lacked the proper assistance they require in order to perform at their peak in the classroom. The foundation states that “Most of the country’s K-12 public school teachers lack access to the tailored feedback, high-quality instructional materials, and support they need to do their best work and continually improve” (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015b).

In other discourse, teacher testimonials have been the most widely recognized sponsorship given for the Common Core Standards. In an interview with a high school math teacher from Cambridge, Massachusetts, Peter Mili states that “One of the broad goals is that the increased rigor of the Common Core will help everyone become college and/or career ready” (Lang, 2013). Mili goes on to note that “If a student who was taught how to think critically and how to read texts for information and analysis can explain the premise behind a mathematical thesis, she’ll have options and opportunities” (Lang, 2013). As stated by Vicky Phillips (2015), a member of the Gates Foundation College-Ready team:

A culture of excellence begins with defining it. That’s what started the movement to the new college- and career-ready standards. Governors agreed that all kids should be taught high standards—and across the country, states agreed that standards should be based on the skills and knowledge students need to go to college or get a good job (Phillips, 2015).

The supposition that high standards are required to produce college-ready students is predicated on three problems: 1) high school diplomas do not adequately prepare students for college, 2) high school college preparatory curriculum is not a full-proof measurement of success in college, and 3) the number of college freshmen not ready for college is extremely high (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2010). The statistics on these problems were perceived to be revealing in terms of what needed to be done on a grand scale with the direction of public

education policy. In a report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Southern Regional Education Board (2010), “nearly 60 percent of first-year college students discover that, despite being fully eligible to attend college, they are not academically ready for postsecondary studies” (p. 1). Based on this data, the high school diploma is not always an indication of college readiness. This report goes on to contend that the No Child Left Behind policy has provided a means by which schools were able to lessen their student proficiency standards in order to maintain a higher graduation rate (p. 3). The report finds:

Most states that have high school exit exams or other “high-stakes” tests readily acknowledge that the exams measure proficiency at the 8th- to 10th-grade levels. They are set at this level due to pressures on states and schools to minimize the numbers of students who do not receive a diploma. No Child Left Behind has reinforced this tendency, as the law holds states accountable for high school graduation rates irrespective of proficiency levels represented by the diploma (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2010).

These arguments provided organizations such as the Gates Foundation with enough motive to study the gaps between high school and college-readiness. The formation of Gates’ college-ready team prompted the examination of select high schools around the country and development of pilot programs in order to minimize this fissure on a small scale. The contention is that the implementation of the country-wide Common Core Standards, along with support from organizations such as the Gates Foundation, aspire to bridge the so-called college-readiness gap in the long term.

2.4.3.4 What does it mean for students to have standardized curriculum in all states?

As a result of the effects of the Common Core Standards on students, there is a drastic shift within the dynamics of K-12 learning environments. Some educators believe that with a common standard of learning in all states, children who must relocate to schools in other states will have a better handle on the curriculum. The contention is that under previous policies, when a child moved from one state to another, the learning was very fragmented due to the lack of consistent standards being taught. A teacher in Washington, D.C., believes that in the past:

There has been no alignment from state to state on what's being taught, so when a fourth-grade student learning geometry and fractions in the first quarter of the school year suddenly moves to Kansas in the second quarter, he may have entirely different lessons to learn and be tested on (Long, 2013).

The consensus is that the implementation of consistent standards allows students who may move from state to state will have a more stable and less disruptive education in the process. The contention is that students in each corresponding grade will be learning the same concepts in each subject area in all school districts across the country.

2.4.4 Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)

With the previous No Child Left Behind policy in continued controversy since its inception in 2002, a plea for less testing in the classroom was heard by teachers, parents, and administrators of public schools across the country. As a result of this mandate for change, on December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act through a reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. This was the eighth such reauthorization of this Act; each iteration superseded modifications to the original law from 1965 and any subsequent changes.

According to its advocates, the primary intention of the Every Student Succeeds Act was to offer a long-awaited solution to the No Child Left Behind policy. This politically bipartisan policy was designed to build upon the Obama Administration's education initiatives throughout his presidency, beginning in 2009 with the Race to the Top. One of the major tenets of this new policy is that school districts be empowered "to develop their own strong systems for school improvement based upon evidence, rather than imposing cookie-cutter federal solutions like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) did" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). This policy also states that there be a considerable reduction in assessment testing in order to ease the burden of administrators, teachers, and students without sacrificing accountability (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). In maintaining accountability, states must continue to assist those students who may fall behind "with a particular focus on the lowest-performing 5 percent of schools, high schools with high dropout rates, and schools where subgroups of students are struggling" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). Overall, advocates for this policy intended to offer more support for schools, including teachers and students alike in obtaining the training and help needed to be successful in their roles.

2.4.5 Conclusion

In examining the education reform timeline, there are critical transitions between the centuries and the evolution of the United States public education system. The changing economic and social landscape of the nation continued to influence the trajectory of education reform by requiring a need for educated citizens to occupy positions within a capitalistic society. In the 21st century, more than ever, the federal government is aligning itself with global interests and education standards that meet or surpass those of other nations. Advocates for reform now rely

on arguments that focus on the so-called competitive global market, which has now become the driving force in public education and a measurement for success in schools.

The centuries of policies noted here, appear to offer consistency of focus with the goal to ameliorate the marginalization of socioeconomic segments of student populations and school districts. As evidenced by the government's data on education, these efforts have not produced a significant positive change in minority success in the classroom. The White population of students continues to surpass all other races and ethnicities in the same grades. The rise in population, along with turbulent economic periods, increased the learning gap in the classroom.

The advent of the Common Core Standards has given hope to those who perceive a "fix" to education imbalances as simply providing "equal," "consistent," and "rigorous" standards in K-12 schools within all states across the country. The chapters ahead will provide an examination of the rhetorical discourse of those with power, who have assisted in the implementation of the Common Core Standards. In addition, the discourse of dissenters of this implementation will be considered with a focus on understanding the dynamics of language, power, and hegemony in shaping policies, the public school system, and ultimately society.

Chapter 3: The Education Reform Rhetoric of Bill Gates

As described in Chapter Two, the evolution of United States public school education began with the implementation of the state-to-state Common School education system of the 19th century. The term “education reform” was generated by changes in policy and procedure, along with variations in assessment and curriculum within the public education system. Thus, education reform has often been a subject embedded in political platforms and continues to be part of national public policy. Although historically a state run and implemented policy, public education has now been labeled by some critics as a federally mandated program through the executed plan known as the Common Core State Standards. With key supporters such as Bill Gates and President Obama, the program has been receiving both support and criticism concerning the means by which the plan came to fruition and the process by which it was enacted upon state schools.

This chapter seeks to expose and analyze the underlying persuasive strategies of two speeches delivered by Bill Gates on education reform policy in the United States. In order to unravel the power relations in his language, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be conducted on these speeches. The intention of this study is to analyze the rhetorical strategies within Gates’ speeches, along with the significance of the rhetorical discourse surrounding his speeches. Gates is recognized as someone of financial and social prominence both nationally and globally. The status of his global influence is directly related to financial and cultural capital resulting from his worldwide status as a leader in international software technology innovations. Thus, the magnitude of his power provides him the means to effect education policy on a national scale.

In delving into the financial trail of his foundation, evidence of his economic support for various education based organizations reaches far and wide. As represented in the illustration below, Gates has infused over \$200 million into various organizations in support of education

reform and the Common Core Standards. The breakdown includes \$68 million to non-profit organizations, \$50 million to states and schools, \$41 million to think tanks and advocacy groups, \$19 million to Common Core creators, \$14 million to education companies, \$13 million to higher education institutions, and \$10 million to unions (Vicens, 2014) (see Appendix F for details).



Source: Gates Foundation Photograph: Win McNamee

Figure 3.1: Gates Foundation Allocation of Money to Support Common Core Standards, 2000-2014
Source: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/09/bill-melinda-gates-foundation-common-core>

As depicted above, based on the financial influence of the Gates Foundation, this type of support goes a long way in furthering policy changes on a national scale. The foundation has been able to monetarily fuel many of the major education organizations across the country in their support for the Common Core Standards. Two of these organizations include those who directly drafted the Common Core Standards: the Council of Chief State School Officers (\$17 million) and the National Governors Association (\$2 million) (Vicens, 2014). The Foundation's fiscal support for

these various organizations is clearly noted on the Gates Foundation website and as such, is public information.

As described here, the economic power and influence exercised by the Gates Foundation has proven to deliver a change in education policy more expeditious than in recent history. The substantial funding of organizations in support of the Common Core Standards clearly aided in its implementation across the country. Based on the amount of influential organizations funded, the contention of this project is that the Common Core would not have been so swiftly developed if not for the financial backing of Bill Gates and his Foundation.

The forthcoming exploration of language and power relations through the speeches of Gates will provide a view of how private enterprise affects United States education policy. The first speech analyzed is from *A Forum on Education in America*, which took place in Seattle, WA on November 11, 2008 and the second speech is from the *Teachers and Learning Conference* in Washington, D.C. on March 14, 2014. These particular speeches were chosen because each is representative of Gates' reform ideology. Although two speeches cannot fully represent Gates' position, these speeches are key representations of his advocacy and, by comparison, illustrate shifts in language that lend themselves to critical examination. The speech delivered in 2008 depicts his pre-implementation ideology of Common Core Standards and sets the stage in an ambitious plan for the future of the United States education system. The speech delivered in 2014 depicts post-implementation realizations of this policy. However, in order to comprehend how Gates became embroiled in education reform, an understanding of his background and what has led him to this advocacy must be examined.

3.1 The Gates Foundation: ‘Every Life Has Equal Value’

It is well known that Bill Gates is recognized worldwide as the face and founder of Microsoft Corporation, the largest software company in the world. What some people may not know is that since the 1990s, billionaire Gates has become not only the richest man in the world, but one of the leading philanthropists as well. At the center of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (The Gates Foundation) for philanthropic endeavors is the initiative for equality in the public education system of the United States. The Gates contended that at the heart of their mission is equal opportunity for students to learn and obtain real-world skills in order to harvest innovation and advancement for the future of America (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016a). An examination of Gates’ global professional status, along with insights from his philanthropic Foundation, provide a backdrop for his position on public education policy.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation formed in the year 2000; however, prior to this the Gates were already contributing to the eradication of diseases, such as polio and malaria, still widespread in third-world countries (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016b). By 2006, with the help of trustee Warren Buffett, they had focused their philanthropy on three major areas: global health, global development, and work in the United States to include a nation-wide awareness campaign of America’s “substandard” education system (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016b).

In their effort to improve the nation’s educational system, the Gates Foundation recruited so-called knowledgeable advisors from various parts of the country to assist with their plan and approach to this long-standing issue on United States education policy. In early 2008, Bill Gates left the helm of Microsoft Corporation to work full-time for his Foundation. Later that year, Bill and Melinda Gates, along with other notable speakers came together on November 11th to discuss the health of the United States education system at a conference known as *A Forum on Education*

in America, which took place in Seattle, Washington. This speech laid the groundwork for the foundation's ambitious goals in facilitating change in the United States public education system. Their mission was to ensure that teacher and student performance is at their peak regardless of location around country. They stated that the primary objective was to have every high school student prepared to attend college by the time they obtained their diploma. Prior to the 2008 speech, the Foundation had already tried several new initiatives in various school districts across the country with mixed results (Gates, 2008). In 2009, the Gates Foundation continued investing in education by pouring \$290 million into four major school districts across the country (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016a). Although the Gates Foundation's mantra is a noble statement that "Every Life Has Equal Value," not everyone is in agreement with their vision for the United States education system.

3.2 Gates' Advocacy for Education Reform

An examination of Bill Gates' position on education policy is integral to conducting a critical discourse analysis of his public discourse. In considering Gates' position, key components of this study include the inspiration for his advocacy on education reform, Gates' role in the inception of the Common Core Standards, and a look at how private enterprise affects education policy through Gates' example of financial support for reform initiatives.

The Gates Foundation website provides a clear overview and outline of Gates' reform vision for United States public education. The crucial areas of focus for the Foundation on improving education in the United States are teaching, learning, and innovation (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016a). Gates' advocacy for improved public education was fueled by his own high school education in Seattle, Washington. The school even memorializes Gates' alumni connection with a building named after him and his co-founder of Microsoft Corporation,

Paul Allen. In 1986, Gates and his partner Paul Allen (also an alumnus of the school) donated \$2.2 million toward the construction of a new science and math building named Allen-Gates Hall (Lakeside School, 2016b). The school that Gates attended from 7th to 12th grade was the Lakeside School for boys, but now it is a co-educational institution of the same name. It is a private institution that boasts high achievement among its students and 100% college placement upon graduation (Lakeside School, 2016a). Their mission statement promotes a school of high quality and ethics, proclaiming that “We provide a rigorous and dynamic academic program through which effective educators lead students to take responsibility for learning” (Lakeside School, 2016a).

The school website provides quick facts on the overall structure of the school. For instance, they boast that fifty percent of the student body is of color, in addition to twenty-three percent of the faculty (Lakeside School, 2016a). During the period in which Gates attended Lakeside (1968 to 1973), the tuition costs ranged from \$1,725 to \$2,175 annually. As of the 2015-2016 academic year, the tuition cost to attend the Lakeside School is \$30,850 (Lakeside School, 2016a). Although this may be an intimidating figure for many parents, the school does emphasize the availability of financial funding through various sources for those families that have limited incomes. As a result, thirty percent of their students receive financial aid (Lakeside School, 2016a). These statistics have been supplied in order to provide a background of Gates’ secondary school education in terms of the type of school he attended. He did not attend a public high school, nor was he exposed, first hand, to public high school curriculum. Gates attended a private school located in an affluent section of Seattle, Washington, which by today’s standards, could only be attended by those students whose families who could afford the tuition. Currently, if only thirty-percent of the student body is able to receive financial aid, this means that seventy percent of the students come

from families who are able to pay for the costs of attending without assistance. This fact supports the contention that Lakeside School is not an institution where every child can freely attend without substantial financial support. In addition, Gates believes in the mission of his high school to the extent that his own three children now attend the school as well.

As a former student and financial donor of Lakeside School, Gates undoubtedly wields considerable influence in the overall mission of the institution. In a speech given by Gates on September 23, 2005, to the student and administrative body of Lakeside School, his appreciation for his high school education and the basis of what is now the newest education reform policy was loudly proclaimed. In his speech, Gates noted that his Foundation has “invested nearly a billion dollars to re-design high schools around the country to help create an environment where students achieve at a higher level and never fall through the cracks” (Gates, 2005). He prefaced this statement by highlighting one of his key philanthropic goals as being that of “helping more people here in America get the benefits of higher education” (Gates, 2005). Although Gates attended Harvard University and dropped out after his junior year, he contends that Lakeside School was responsible for sparking the entrepreneurial spirit within him, which was the basis for the creation of his multi-billion dollar corporation known as Microsoft.

In his zeal for both administrative success and results-oriented student success at Lakeside School, Gates went on to proclaim that the academic culture found there is a model for education systems across the country. Gates stated that “Our foundation’s work in high schools is based on principles that happen to be deeply ingrained in Lakeside’s culture” (Gates, 2005). These principals, as outlined by Gates, are what he called “the basic building blocks of better high schools” and are described as the three R’s (Gates, 2005):

- The first R is Rigor – making sure all students are given a challenging curriculum that prepares them for college or work;
- The second R is Relevance – making sure kids have courses and projects that clearly relate to their lives and their goals;
- The third R is Relationships – making sure kids have a number of adults who know them, look out for them, and push them to achieve.

It is evident by Gates' affirmation on the influence of Lakeside School, that this experience fueled his vision for redefining success in our public school systems around the country. As such, Gates expanded his views on education policy and infused financial support into several school districts around the country in order to test his vision for a new standard of education achievement. The results generated both successes and failures, but there were enough perceived triumphs to push Gates' proposed education reform agenda to the forefront of national policy debate. By 2008, Gates was ready to report on those trial cases, and in the process, support initiatives that promote a higher standard in United States public schools.

3.3 Gates' Role in the Inception of the Common Core Standards

As described in Chapter Two, prior to Gates' 2008 speech, the conversation about education reform continued to be a concern based on the previous No Child Left Behind policy and its controversies. Gates had already been privately funding changes in selective public schools around the country and the formation of a new national education policy was taking shape behind closed doors. In the summer of 2008, Gates was visited by David Coleman, co-founder of Student Achievement Partners, and Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers in an effort to gain support from Gates to move forward with their idea for learning standards in public schools (Layton, 2014). Coleman and Wilhoit argued their case for standardized curriculum to Gates citing statistics that did not present our future public education system in a positive light (Layton, 2014). Gates, with assurances of their deep commitment to the project, agreed to fully support this initiative (Layton, 2014).

At one point during Gates' 2008 speech, he briefly mentioned a prelude to the Common Core Standards by noting that his Foundation will continue to work with "states and districts to develop a core set of priority standards that students need to succeed in higher education, and getting states and districts to sign on" (Gates, 2008). Gates went on to proclaim that "members of the Common State Standards Coalition have built momentum on this issue – we now have governors and state education chiefs leading the effort" (Gates, 2008). Soon after Gates' 2008 speech, more national attention was paid to the issue of United States education standards and practices. While Gates received additional media attention for his ideas and promotion of change in our education system, it became more evident that influential state and federal leaders were in agreement with Gates' ideas in the way of reform.

As the conversation continued about new reforms in public schools, Bill Gates provided both financial and social backing to a new and improved policy. In 2009, the new education reform policy known as the Common Core Standards emerged from meetings by a majority of state governors and education commissioners across the country. Although Gates denied claims that link him to any direct influence of how this national standard came into existence, the philanthropic trail of his Foundation leads one to surmise that he played a vital role in funding this initiative through various organizations. The funding that Gates provided allowed for one of the fastest implementations of a national education policy in our modern history. Forty-three states initially adopted the Common Core Standards and seven states opted to provide their own version of education reform (see Appendix C).

Since the launch of Gates' funding of public education in the early 2000s, a more standardized method of learning has been the approach in his initiative to help students become what he terms as "college-ready." During the time of his speech in 2014, at the Teaching and

Learning Conference in Washington, D.C., the Common Core Standards remained in place for close to five years in the adoptive states. At this point, there was also much controversy over the standards, its implementation, its effects on students and teachers, and the viability of its future.

3.4 A Critical Discourse Analysis of Bill Gates' Speeches

As stated in Chapter One, prior to applying the principles of a critical discourse analysis, a definition must be made explicit. According to van Dijk (1999), this form of analysis “is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 354). In analyzing text with a critical eye, we must “argue that science, and especially scholarly discourse, are inherently part of and influenced by social structure, and produced in social interaction” (p. 352).

As Fairclough (1993) noted, there are three components of a critical discourse analysis: 1) the *description* of the text, 2) *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction, and 3) *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context (p. 109). An examination of these elements will be offered in this chapter and the chapters ahead within the context of public speeches delivered by Bill Gates, President Obama, and dissenters of the latest education reform policy.

In order to gain perspective on these aforementioned definitions, a critical discourse analysis will be conducted of Bill Gates' speech at *A Forum on Education in America* in 2008 (see Appendix D for full text) and an in-depth analysis of his speech at the 2014 *Teachers and Learning Conference* in Washington, D.C. (see Appendix E for full text). This analysis will provide insight on how discourse and power structures play a vital role in shaping the social, political, and cultural landscape of a nation, and in turn, how these landscapes shape discourse.

This inquiry begins with an examination of the various elements that surround the context of Bill Gates' speeches and then studies the properties within the content of his speeches, as described in van Dijk's article from 1993 titled "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis." Characteristics such as access patterns, setting, timing of speeches and participant roles, along with properties of the speech itself, including topics, genres, speech acts, argumentation, and others will be analyzed. To conduct an effective CDA, the author must make his/her position clear as part of the analysis. As such, this analysis is conducted from the point of view of those who are in opposition to Gates' education advocacy. An analysis of the text that notably exhibits the dominance of power through its discursive practice will be shown.

3.4.1 Accessibility

Van Dijk (1993) defines accessibility as the speaker using his power to control the context in which the speech is given and access to venues that promote his rhetoric (p. 270). At the time of his 2008 speech, Bill Gates was ranked the third wealthiest person on the planet by *Forbes Magazine* (Kroll, 2008). The power that Gates holds on both a national and global scale due to his economic prowess allows for him to be easily recognized and to gain press coverage under any circumstance. Because Gates was the organizer of the gathering that took place in 2008 for his speech, he had full control over the venue, attendees, and the context in which the event took place.

At the time of his 2014 speech, Bill Gates was ranked the wealthiest person on the planet by *Forbes Magazine* (Brown, 2014). The 2014 speech in Washington, D.C. was not an event that Gates organized. This was a national conference on teaching and learning where Gates was an invited and honored participant, along with several other notable attendees from the education sector. In contrast to the 2008, when Gates was the organizer and had full control over the context, the 2014 conference was not organized by Gates. Instead, Gates was a high level participant.

Despite the fact that Gates' control over the context surrounding the 2014 speech was not as evident, his presence at the event was an indicator of his influence on education reform policy.

3.4.2 Setting and Timing of Speeches

When evaluating the setting and timing of Bill Gates speeches, it is evident that “the power and authority of [a speaker's] speech is also signaled and maybe enhanced by elements of the setting” (van Dijk, 1993, pp. 270-271). Van Dijk (1993) states that location, prestigious props, media coverage, and the presence of other notable figures play a role in validating speaker authority (p. 271). Both of Bill Gates' 2008 and 2014 speeches were delivered in locations notable for extensive media coverage.

The location of the 2008 speech took place in Gates' hometown of Seattle, Washington, the world headquarters for both his software corporation and his philanthropic foundation. Although research has not revealed the exact location for the speech, this hometown setting indicates that he will gain a large amount of media coverage, both locally and on a national scale. In addition, the speech was given just one week after the presidential election that resulted in a new president in the White House. It is also given on Veteran's Day, which is a national holiday. Attendees of the conference included (in addition to Bill and Melinda Gates) Bill Gates' father, Warren Buffett, and various members of the Gates Foundation involved in education reform initiatives. Both Bill and Melinda Gates mentioned the newly elected president as a guiding light of change, with an implication of his support for their ideas on education reform. The location of the 2014 speech took place in the nation's political capital, Washington, D.C. This conference was held at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, which was named after the first black mayor of Washington, D.C. The range of attendees included teachers, administrators, policy makers, political education leaders, and affluent financial supporters of education reform. This

conference took place almost five years after the countrywide implementation of the Common Core Standards. As of 2014, there were both positive and negative feedback on the new state education standards. At this point, several states which originally adopted the standards were now trying to withdraw their support and implementation.

3.4.3 Genre

In examining this category, it is evident that Gates had “special access to a genre only he and his colleagues are entitled to engage in” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 271) due to his economic and social influence. The genre of this discourse goes under the category of public policy speech in addressing education reform and social policy. Although Gates made numerous speeches relative to business endeavors, education policy is not an area of Gates’ expertise based on his professional background. This is an area of personal philanthropic interest through his foundation, and therefore, the implication is that Gates would not have access to such genres if he did not have the national and global economic supremacy that he possesses today.

3.4.4 Communicative Acts and Social Meanings

Through his speeches Gates “locally expresses or signals various social meanings and categories of social interaction” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 271). In the introduction of his 2008 speech, a formal and polite decorum is exhibited to the attendees (“Good Morning”). He immediately followed a speech delivered by his wife and co-chair of the foundation, Melinda Gates. In opening with a positive stance, noting that good things can only be accomplished together, Gates began his speech with the following statement:

Good Morning. Big advances only come when **committed people** study the same problems and build on each other’s work. It accelerates discovery, and **I’m optimistic** about what **all of us** can accomplish together (Gates, 2008, para 1).

By leading with the words “committed people” and “all of us,” Gates referred to those of power and influence that are in attendance with him at the forum. This included his wife, Melinda Gates, his father, William Gates Sr., Warren Buffet, and members of his education reform team, known as the “college-ready team.” Those in attendance were expected to have the power and ability to initiate the changes that are stated in Gates’ speech with regard to public education policy. Gates’ comment on being “optimistic” sets a level of expectation in terms of his desire for success of his programs and the ability of his employees, supporters, and trustees to accomplish the goal set forth by the foundation.

In the introduction of his 2014 speech, Gates began without a formal introduction or greeting. Gates proceeds to make his (and his wife’s) position clear on the latest education policy in a very definitive statement that set the tone for his speech. Gates began with the following:

Public education is the single greatest instrument for **equal opportunity** in America. That is why Melinda and I focus on public schools. And that is why **we support a change** that can trigger big gains for our students: the Common Core State Standards (Gates, 2014, para 1).

By leading with the words “equal opportunity in America” and “we support a change,” Gates contended that a public education is key to equality and success for students. Gates was providing his support for this new “change” because it is in line with the work he has been doing with high schools since the year 2000. The opening statement he provides here is consistent with statements from the speech made in 2008 with regard to his expressed belief in equal opportunity through public school education.

3.4.5 Participant Positions and Roles

On a professional level, his social identities are that of an entrepreneur, a business owner, a chairman, and a philanthropist. Gates was raised in an upper-middle class family and he is also white and male. Gates' social distinctiveness indicates that, it is not only his role as philanthropist that influences arrangements and tactics of his speeches, but also his identity as a member of white dominant elites (van Dijk, 1993, p. 272).

In studying Gates' role in each of the speeches analyzed here, it is revealed that he and his wife were the hosts for *A Forum on Education in America* in 2008. At the time of his 2014 speech, although not an organizer of the conference, Gates was considered a plenary speaker, along with several other notables in business and academia. As a plenary speaker, he was essentially a keynote speaker of the event and is given higher status than other attendees. These characteristics speak to the social, economic, and cultural prominence that Gates possesses.

3.4.6 Speech Acts

In defining speech acts, van Dijk (1993) refers to the speaker making assertions and accusations. A full definition of a speech act proposed by the language philosopher, John Searle, is also relevant here. Searle (1999) contends that there are four primary elements that constitute a speech act that may be performed by a speaker. These elements are described as: 1) making an assertion, 2) asking a question, 3) giving an order, and 4) expressing a wish or desire (Searle, 1999, p. 23). In examining the words in Gates' speech from 2008, the heart of his discourse asserts that the current education system is broken and needs stricter testing and evaluation practices in order to improve. He also asserts that he and his wife know the definition of "equality in America" and how that can be accomplished. Here is an excerpt of his comments:

Melinda and I believe that providing every child with **a good education is the only path to equality in America**. A good education means completing a postsecondary degree.

And yet when we began our work eight years ago, the level of high school dropouts made even starting a postsecondary degree **impossible for millions of students** (Gates, 2008, para. 2).

In addressing the issues of the current education system, Gates first provided some statistics on what he called the “disappointments.” He spoke in a definitive voice in terms of how his foundation can improve the situation in schools across the country. He portrays a “fix-it” approach in the way he introduces the “evidence” and what his foundation plans to do about it. This is another instance of power and dominance in control when he claims to have a “fix” to a problem that is on a national scale. Gates stated:

We were determined to find ways to **work with our partners** to turn around rising dropout rates, and increase the number of high school students who graduated from high school ready to succeed in college. We **hoped that if we could build a model** of a high-achieving school, it would be picked up by other schools. So **we focused on 8 percent of schools**, hoping that the lessons from our work in the 8 percent would scale to the 92 percent.

As Melinda said, **we are determined to follow the evidence**. So let me describe what we’ve found, what we make of it, and **what we’re going to do about it** (Gates, 2008, para. 3).

By using such definitive statements as “we are determined,” “we hoped,” “we focused,” and “what we’re going to do about it,” Gates was exerting his cultural and economic capital as a way to promote modifying the national education system. Within the context of Gates’ speech, there seems to be a black and white approach in terms of the issue and the solution, with no gray areas. Although Gates’ used the words “hoped” and “if,” these signify an expectation that was clearly

not met in terms of trial reforms and the effect that this would have on the remaining 92 percent of schools. There is also the assertion that he, his wife, and his team know what is right and good for the United States' education system. In addition, they exert their power by making it their responsibility to change the United States public education system. As Bourdieu (1991) notes, the "position of a given agent in the social space can thus be defined by the position he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers that are active in each of them" (p. 230). Gates wields power in social, cultural, and economic spaces due to his prestigious status as both a national and global figure.

The focus of Gates' 2014 speech is that he and his wife believe the new Common Core Standards are a springboard for "innovation" and give teachers the freedom they need to be effective in the classroom. In addition, Gates asserts that these standards also provide students with a challenging curriculum needed to be successful in college and career. His declaration in using phrases such as "we are convinced," "freedom you need," "tools you need," and "rigor that our students need" speaks to his perceived command of the issue and the depth of his influence. In using these terms in his speech, he is telling his audience that he is an authority on what student and teachers need. Gates stated:

After studying them [Common Core Standards], talking to teachers about them, and seeing students learn from them, **we are convinced** that the new standards are a platform for innovation. They will give teachers the **freedom** you need to be creative, the **tools** you need to be effective, the **feedback** you need to keep improving – and the **rigor that our students need to become great learners** (Gates, 2014, para 2).

Gates explained that the standards are "benchmarks in math and English for what students should know" and notes that their objective is to stimulate "critical thinking and problem-solving"

skills. He also acknowledged that not everyone agrees with the standards and recognizes that some people want to remove them from the public schools. Gates also expressed his desires by saying “I want to offer my view” on the validity and retention of these standards. Gates stated:

They’re also inspiring heated debate. Some of the debate comes from people who want **more time and support for teachers to implement the standards.** Some of the debate comes from people who want to **stop the standards,** which would send us back to what we had before. As someone who **passionately supports the new standards, I want to offer my views today about what they are, why we need them, and what should be done to help teachers master them** (Gates, 2014, para. 4).

As with his speech from 2008, Gates continued to exert his cultural and economic capital, but now in support of the latest education reform implementation. Gates’ simplified focus on public education being the sole instrument for equality in the United States does not take into account the many factors involved in achieving that equality beyond an education standard. As noted in an article from Joan SerVaas (2011), publisher of the *Saturday Evening Post*, equality and opportunity for students depend upon so much more than a public education. SerVaas (2011) states, “...our schools are failing for reasons that have little to do with education and a lot to do with larger socioeconomic issues” (p. 4). Although Gates mentioned the word “equality” in both speeches in relation to standardized education curriculum, he does not mention the challenges that ultimately affect the learning outcome when administering these or any other standards to students. The numerous socioeconomic factors such as poverty, violence, drugs, and family dysfunctions that may inhibit the intellectual growth of students are not being addressed by Gates.

3.4.7 Macro Semantics: Topics

The term “macro semantics” refers to the primary topics in Gates’ speeches. In exploring the collective level at which Gates makes his contentions, we see that he has the power to “not only define and redefine the topics, but also to define the situation” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 273). His 2008 speech reflects a need for enhanced education standards in all our public schools. Other major topics broached in his speech relate to teacher qualifications and the quality of teaching methods. Gates believed that teachers need more training and support in order to better serve their students in the classroom. By elaborating on what teachers need and “focusing on effective teaching,” Gates implied that the majority of teachers are not effective in their teaching methods and proclaims “that is what’s holding us back.” At the macro semantic level, this is his attempt to define the issues surrounding the need for improved education standards and justification for change. Gates argued:

But the defining feature of a great education is what happens in the classroom. Everything starts from that and must be built around it. So we’re going to sharpen our **focus on effective teaching—in particular supporting new standards, curriculum, instructional tools, and data that help teachers**—because these changes trigger the biggest gains, they are hardest to scale, and **that is what’s holding us back** (Gates, 2008, para. 21).

His comments also speak of resistance by administrators and school officials to make difficult changes in order to move forward with better reform solutions. He stated that “schools were not willing to do the hard things” that he believed would ultimately change the success of students. In stating this, Gates denotes a shift in responsibility for the partial failure of his specific attempts at reform by implicating the role of school administrators. Gates’ emphasis on change, including

removing what he deemed as “ineffective staff” did not set well with administrators. Gates went on to argue:

To be successful, a redesign requires **changing** the roles and responsibilities of adults, and **changes** to the school’s culture. In some districts, we got tacit agreement to move forward, **but then the schools weren’t willing to do the hard things**—like removing ineffective staff or significantly increasing the rigor of the curriculum (Gates, 2008, para. 13).

The primary topic in Gates’ 2014 speech reflects his support of the Common Core Standards and why he believes these standards are needed in our public education system. Other topics included in his speech relate to not setting the bar high enough for student challenges and achievement. Gates stressed that there is a gap between high school success and college success. In advocating for the Common Core, Gates contends that these standards provide students with the proper foundation to succeed at each grade level and eventually college and career. Again, Gates simplifies the learning process and ignores extraneous factors that may hinder students’ learning experience in the classroom. Gates stated:

First, **the new standards are set high** to match the needs of students who want to go to college or get a job that leads to a career. If we teach to these standards, we will finally make good on the covenant between schools and students: “If you learn what we teach, **you will be ready to succeed at the next stage** (Gates, 2014, para. 10).

3.4.8 Argumentation

The premise of Gates’ arguments presented in 2008 is nestled in the data that he provided his audience based on research studies conducted through his foundation. The studies conducted and funded by the foundation were examples of both successes and failures. The failures were categorized by Gates as those situations where administrators and school systems resisted change.

As van Dijk (1993) notes, “argumentation plays a prominent role” whereby “a negative description of the facts” is explained, along with other key elements in Gates’ case, such as critics of policy change known as “detractors” and the claim that Gates plan for public education is beneficial to all stakeholders.

As noted in the 2008 speech, in an effort to gain more momentum in his policy, Gates attempted to use pilot schools as examples for other schools, but this plan did not take hold. Gates demonstrated, in detail, the results of one success story in Houston, Texas; however, he contended that other schools did not want to change or make difficult decisions in order to make the policies work. The emphasis on the word “we” is frequently noted throughout his speech with phrases such as “we wanted,” “we believe,” “we need,” “we make,” and “we plan.” The focus of “we” references the Gates Foundation research and the outcomes resulting from their attempts to change various schools around the country. Gates contended:

We wanted to reach all schools indirectly, by showing clear gains and inspiring other schools and districts to replicate those models. **Largely, this has not happened.**

At our foundation, **we believe** that success ultimately means that **at least 80 percent of low-income and minority students graduate from high school college-ready.** According to **our data**, the number of low income and minority students graduating college ready today is 22 percent, and that figure is increasing far too slowly. **It’s unacceptable. We need to do better.**

So let me describe what **we make** of the evidence, and what **we plan** to do next (Gates, 2008, para. 11-12).

In exercising his power, his foundation hoped that schools would respond to his restructuring designs without hesitation. In noting the “disappointing results,” he states that schools were not

willing to make the necessary changes to fit the program that his foundation designed. However, Gates noted the realization that change is difficult and effective results were even more difficult than expected. He argued:

The **disappointing results** showed how hard it can be to convert large, low-performing high schools into smaller, more autonomous schools. We saw that there is a big difference between graduating from high school and being ready for college. In New York City, less than 40 percent of the class of 2007 met the City University of New York's standard for college readiness on the Regent exams. And the percentage of students from small schools was no better than the rest of the city (Gates, 2008, para. 13).

He is accused by some critics as having unrealistic expectations and oversimplifying the complexities of the nation's school systems. As a historian and a research professor of education at New York University's Steinhardt School, Diane Ravitch has argued on numerous occasions about the state of our education system, and noted that Gates has a narrow conception of teacher success and quality. Ravitch contends that Gates has a "misguided belief that teacher quality can be determined by student test scores" (Dodge, 2012, p. 56). As exhibited in Gates' speech, he focuses on the problem of ineffective teaching and how this aspect of education needs major improvement. Gates stated:

We're not the first people to focus on effective teaching to improve education. We're not even the first people in this room. A growing **body of evidence** tells us that **teacher effectiveness is the single most important factor in student achievement** (Gates, 2008, para. 22).

The fact that Gates determined ineffective teachers to be the problem in preventing student achievement has come under fire by many. By implicating teachers, Gates was essentially saying that principals, teachers, and school administrators are not suited to do their jobs. He gained both support and opposition to these claims as a result of his continued battle for change in public schools.

In 2014, Gates explained the features of the Common Core in order to emphasize the importance of standards in education. The major tenets of his argument are based on what he deems as the positive features of the Common Core, along with how it advances the profession of teaching, and provides a platform for innovation. He went on to make the case that our 50 states should not have 50 different sets of standards for teaching students. In using negative words like “punish,” “disadvantage,” and “blatantly unfair” he tried to persuade his audience that previous alternatives to the Common Core – a diverse set of standards - have proven to be detrimental to students in the past due to lack of proper preparation for college exams. In providing the example between Kentucky and Tennessee and Maryland and Virginia in learning math, he presents a clear portrayal in support of his argument. In making his claim for consistent standards across all states, he emphasized how inconsistency of curriculum is damaging to students. Gates stated:

Some people who see the value of higher standards **don’t see the need for shared standards.** Why can’t we have 50 separate sets of standards, so long as they’re higher? The answer is: **Inconsistent standards punish students.** When students want to go to college, they take the ACT or the SAT. When they get into college, they may take placement tests. **Students who haven’t been taught what’s on these tests are at a huge disadvantage.**

Under the old standards, if you were from Kentucky, you didn't have to know the quadratic formula, but your neighbors in Tennessee did. If you were from Maryland, you didn't have to learn trigonometry, but your neighbors in Virginia did. If you didn't learn an area of math that other students did, you might find out about it for the first time on a test that helps determine your future. **That's blatantly unfair to millions of students** (Gates, 2014, para. 13).

In addition to creating more advantages for students entering colleges, Gates believed that these standards would "advance the teaching profession." In his effort to convince his audience of this, his argument focused on the word "standards," which is part of the name of a national teaching organization. Gates pointed out:

There is another crucial reason for making **standards** consistent from state to state: Clear, consistent **standards** will advance the teaching profession. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards demonstrates even in its title the essential link between **standards** and **a profession** (Gates, 2014, para. 14).

Gates advocated for the Common Core by saying that it helps to promote freedom, not hinder it, as some critics have suggested. In his effort to "be open about this," he knew the implication that government may be involved in these standards does not rest well with public opinion and offered to sympathize with that mindset. This type of argumentation tactic points to Gates' ability to spin criticism of these standards as negative and detrimental to the overall goal of education policy. Gates proclaimed that these standards are "different" and emphasized that they promote "freedom" with the following statement:

But let's be open about this. When most of us hear that the government is going to set a new standard, the first thing we think is – 'this is going to get in my way.' **Believe me; I**

understand this reaction. But it's important to explain to people that this is different – that **the common core standards don't limit freedom; they promote freedom** (Gates, 2014, para. 15).

Gates stressed the importance and the current usage of “standards” in our daily lives and business operations. In furthering his arguments, Gates used examples of how standards must be followed in order to communicate and innovate throughout society. In this segment of his argumentation tactic, he exercised his business experience and knowledge in relating the usage of the word “standard” and its meaning throughout different industries in society. Gates argued:

As you know, a standard means, in one sense, a ‘level of performance’. But there is another meaning that is relevant here – a standard also means ‘a common definition that everyone understands and accepts’.

These **standards** are so ubiquitous in society that we often don't see them, but they are crucial to innovation. A **standard** electrical outlet allows technological innovations to be used in every home. A **standard** computer language (TCP/IP) allows billions of people to share information on the internet. A **standard** shipping container lets us move goods from ships to trains to trucks. **Standard** units allow scientists to share data. Without consistent **standards**, we wouldn't be able to share information or spread innovation (Gates, 2014, para. 16-17).

In providing examples on a “standard” or “standards,” Gates continued with the significance of students being given consistency in their education. He believes that without these standards, there is a lack of agreement with regard to goals. He contended that the United States should not have different interpretations of what students need to be taught in the classroom. In his argument, Gates attempted to make the distinction between what is taught and how it is taught in the

classroom. Although he acknowledged criticism with regard to innovation, he emphasized that these standards promote innovation, rather than inhibit it in the classroom. This is another argumentation tactic of turning a negative statement into a positive one in favor of standards. Gates stated:

When there are 50 different interpretations of what students need to know, it's harder to make progress toward **big goals** because **it's hard to agree on the goals**. On the other hand, when everyone embraces **consistent standards**, you can define goals, test methods, and see what's effective. That's why **consistent standards** are so important to teaching: they provide a shared platform that allows teachers to **communicate, cooperate, innovate, learn from each other and keep pushing to get better**.

I've discussed this with people who say – how can standards be a platform for innovation if everyone has to teach the same standards? They're confusing standards and curriculum. They're not the same. **Standards say only what your students need to learn; they don't tell you how to teach it** (Gates, 2014, para. 18-19).

In Gates' speech, he advocated for creating tools that help teachers in applying these standards to reach all students. In illustrating an example, Gates made the argument that consistent standards cultivate innovation by using computer software. He also claimed that by utilizing software technology in the classroom as tools for learning, teachers can spend less time on content matter and more time working with students. Gates maintained:

Consistent standards will also lead to tools that help teachers reach each student. Until now, different **standards** in every state made it hard for innovators to design tools that a lot of teachers could use, so teachers haven't enjoyed the technology advances that benefit other professionals. **Consistent standards** can change that.

Imagine you're teaching the standard on analyzing the differences between a book and a film. How can you engage every student at the highest level? **What if someone developed software** that allowed students to choose the book and film that interest them most? That would personalize the experience and help engage each student.

Or imagine you're teaching students to "prove theorems about lines and angles." You could point them to an on-line program that demonstrates how to do the proofs and then tests their knowledge. **If the student doesn't get it, the software can review the concepts**, taking her as far back as she needs to go to start getting it right. Meanwhile, **teachers no longer have to spend class time delivering content; they are now free to do the things that software can't do – work with students one-on-one or in small groups, motivating them and boosting their confidence** (Gates, 2014, para. 22-24).

In his argument for promoting the use of online tools and technology in education standards, critics of the implementation would say that this type of learning removes the role of "teaching" from the teacher. If the technology and tools used in the classroom become more instructional, the teacher then becomes a facilitator instead of an educator in the classroom.

Gates has also been accused of mirroring his advocacy on education standards with his implementation of key workplace ideals at his Microsoft Corporation. One of the biggest criticisms of Gates' efforts on education reform with regard to the Common Core is that it reflects Microsoft's employee work model. In an article for *AlterNet.org*, David Morris reflects upon Gates' "imposing the Microsoft model" in our public schools systems and how Microsoft has now abandoned said model because it did not work. Morris (2013) notes "it turns out that Microsoft realizes its model has led the once highly competitive company in a race to the bottom." Although Gates' software

company has undergone a restructuring of principles, the push for the Common Core strongly continues in his agenda and his rhetoric.

3.4.9 Rhetoric

Studying the components of Aristotelean rhetoric in Gates' speeches, reveals that he used such elements as contrastive comparison, rhetorical questions, and parallelisms in order to persuade his audience. As van Dijk (1993) explains, "these rhetorical features emphasize what has been expressed at the semantic, syntactic, and lexical levels of his speech, namely the positive presentation of [Gates and his support for change] and the negative presentation of [the United States public education system]" (p. 278). Gates continually used the method of storytelling to introduce comparisons, questions, and negative representation of the opposing side of his arguments within both speeches.

In Gates' 2008 speech, he advocated for building data systems that help evaluate, as well as support teachers in the classroom. In the excerpt below, Gates illustrated a comparison example between two classrooms from the same school in evaluating the difference between the success of one teacher against another in determining what works and what doesn't in the classroom. Gates described:

If you take two classrooms from the same school, both starting out at the 50th percentile, and assign one to a teacher in the top quartile and another to a teacher in the bottom quartile, there will be a 10 percentile difference in achievement at the end of the year (Gates, 2014, para. 22).

Gates then went on to use rhetorical questions in his speech to underscore the point that there are no clear measurements for teachers in the classroom. In this statement he attempted to convince the audience that there is a clear view of what a "great teacher" looks like in the classroom and

that research, along with higher standards will help to define successful teaching methods. In making comparisons, he also proclaimed that other countries whose students accelerate in math have a better grasp of successful curriculum because of their collective and focused structure.

Gates continued:

In fact, research shows that there is only half as much variation in student achievement between schools as there is across classrooms in the same school. We've known about these huge differences in student achievement in different classrooms for at least 30 years.

Unfortunately, it seems that the field doesn't have a clear view on the characteristics of great teaching.

Is it using one curriculum over another? Is it extra time after school?

We don't really know.

The **first step in identifying effective teaching** has to be setting fewer, clearer, higher standards that are aligned with the goal of graduating students from high school college-ready. You can't compare teachers if they're not pursuing a common standard. **I believe strongly in national standards. Countries that excel in math, for example, have a far more focused, common curriculum than the United States does** (Gates, 2014, para. 23-24).

Using phrases such as 'money is tight,' "we're spending millions," 'we've spent millions,' and "we're spending \$8 billion a year" is a way of emphasizing that money is being wasted. Gates talked of "evidence" and what it suggests with regard to money, but does not give a specific example of this in his speech. By stating that any opposition to drastic changes in the school system is an "impossible case," he signified that change is both imminent and forthcoming despite

resistance. Gates also advocated for removing ineffective teachers based on financial need by stating:

Money is tight. We need to spend it wisely. We're now spending \$8 billion a year for teachers with master's degrees, even though the evidence suggests that master's degrees do not **improve student achievement**. **We're spending billions** on a seniority system, even though the evidence says that seniority, after the first five years, may not **improve student achievement**. **We've spent billions** to reduce class size, even though there is no strong evidence that spending money to reduce class size in high school is the most impactful way to **improve student performance**.

And the last thing we can afford—whether the economy is good or bad—**is to pay teachers who can't do the job**. As **President-elect Obama and others have pointed out**: We need to give all teachers the benefit of clear standards, sound curriculum, good training, and top instructional tools. But if their students still keep falling behind, they're in the wrong line of work, and **they need to find another job**.

Anyone who opposes dramatic change in our schools has to make an impossible case. Either they have to deny that our schools are failing, or they have to argue that the kids are to blame. **Either view is wrong**. If you believe every child can learn—and the evidence strongly supports this—then if the students don't learn, the school must change.

It won't be easy, but it's essential (Gates, 2014, para. 44-45).

In applying these rhetorical elements to the 2014 speech, Gates used questions in his arguments, compared previous policy shortcomings to current policy, and made reference to those who oppose this policy as not being informed. His nullification of statements in opposition to the Common

Core Standards is his rhetorical attempt to discredit those who he deems as uninformed about “the facts.” Some examples of arguments in Gates speech included:

There is **one thing that worries me**, though. It’s the **false claims that some people keep making about the standards**.

It’s a federal takeover. It’s a national curriculum. It’s the end of innovation.

None of this is true, and the controversy it stirs up takes the focus away from helping teachers. When people are yelling about problems that aren’t there, they make it harder to solve the challenges that are there.

Even if it will never **persuade some people**, it’s important to repeat the facts. The states designed the standards, not the federal government. The **standards are goals, not methods**. They say what should be learned, not how it must be taught (Gates, 2014, para. 31-34).

Gates continually gave positive representation of the Common Core Standards and negative representation of those who are in opposition to the standards as making false claims. He labeled these adversaries with creating controversy and not focusing on what is “real.” This type of discourse is geared toward making the negative statements about the Common Core sound ill-informed. Gates pleaded:

The transition to the **new standards is hard – but it has to be**. We’re trying to get America’s kids ready for life in a global knowledge-based economy. As one teacher put it: “The kids that are leaving my room – they’re not all going to be trying to get a job in the town where I teach.”

The standards shouldn’t be a mark of where students came from, but a key to wherever they want to go.

I hope each one of you can be involved in this discussion and **bring it back to what's real**. **I hope you can find time to sit down with parents in your community and tell them what the standards really are** (Gates, 2014, para. 38-40).

In the closing of his speech, Gates implored his audience (consisting of mainly educators) to recognize that these standards are the key to the future. Gates' discourse proclaimed this as the only way in which all students will have an equal chance in college and career. Gates closing comments argued:

The Common Core **isn't just another policy debate**; it's **a pivotal issue for the future**.

It will help prepare all our students for college and career – and that's the best idea our country has for **giving every child an equal chance**. Thank you (Gates, 2014, para. 41).

Gates had strong rhetoric for what he deemed as ineffective teachers and for those who did not want to support his reform ideas. In mentioning the President, he implies that he has the social, cultural, economic, and political support to make the changes that he is proposing. The dominant power structure that he created in the software industry has now been realized on an education policy level. Although Gates' technology innovations have been impacting the world of education for decades, only now is he looking to provide backing for changes in education.

3.4.10 Lexical Style

Gates' power and authority are apparent and are indicative of his presence at conferences and high profile events on education reform over a span of many years. Gates consistently used strong words and methods of persuasion based on research examples funded by his foundation to influence his audience. The relevance of lexical style, as noted by van Dijk (1993), "multiply signals of power, political and moral position, as well as persuasive strategies in influencing

audience” (p. 277). In comparing the lexical usage in Gates’ speeches, an understanding of the patterns and significance of his use of language, persuasion, and rhetoric are revealed.

Examining the specific words (nouns, pronouns, and adjectives) used in both speeches, provides evidence of lexical changes from his language usage in 2009 to his language usage in 2014. A table of the most commonly used words from his speeches is indicated below:

Key Words	2008	2014	Key Words	2008	2014
Achieve/Achievement	14	0	Innovation	1	12
Believe	6	1	Need	16	15
Change	10	3	Parent(s)	0	5
College	17	9	Percent(age)	18	0
Consistent	1	14	Ready	8	6
Equal/Equality	1	2	School	70	8
Evidence	9	1	Standard (s)	12	66
Freedom	0	3	Student (s)	32	33
Great	14	4	Teach/Teacher/Teaching	59	59
I/I’ve/I’m/I’d	10	14	We/We’ve/We’re	67	47
If	12	9	You/Your/You’re/You’ve	11	37

Figure 3.2: Lexical Analysis – Key Word Frequency in Gates’ Speeches

The frequency with which Gates used the word “standard(s)” increased nearly five times more from his speech in 2008 (12 instances) to his speech in 2014 (66 instances). In his speech of 2008, Gates did not mention standards quite as much, whereas he was more focused on selling the idea of “change” in policy. In both speeches, emphasis on pronouns such as “we” and “you” are used frequently in both speeches; however, more focus was on the “you” in his 2014 speech (37 instances) compared to his speech in 2008 (11 instances). In addition, Gates mentioned the words “freedom” and “parents” for the first time in his 2014 speech as well.

By analyzing the frequency of these words, Gates was more focused on “achievement,” “college,” and “school” using “evidence” derived from statistics by means of “percentages” in his 2008 rhetoric. He used these words excessively because he wanted to persuade his audience with statistical facts and figures from his own trial reforms. He placed much importance on the use of evidence in conveying his message about change needing to occur in our public school system.

Contrary to his 2008 speech, Gates' primary focus in 2014 was on "consistent standards" within our school systems. Gates was also trying to persuade his audience that "innovation" was alive and well within the Common Core Standards. Gates' tone in 2014 appeared to represent a more desperate attempt to convince the audience of the benefits of the Common Core Standards and to advocate for the standards with parents and anyone else who may challenge their validity. The word "parent" was not mentioned in his 2008 speech at all, whereas in 2014, it was mentioned five times. This conveys to us that the backlash from parents was significant enough for Gates to mention and address their voice in his argument to preserve the Common Core Standards, but they were not a consideration in 2008. The word "equal" or "equality" was only mentioned once in the 2008 speech and twice in the 2014 speech. Although one of his opening comments in his 2008 speech references "a good education being the only path to equality in America," the issue of equality is virtually non-existent in his speeches.

The support demonstrated by Gates began with language promoting higher standards in 2008, allows us to see the shift in his rhetoric where emphasis on such words as "teachers," "students," and "need" remained a steady presence in both speeches. In 2014, he used strong language to convey his advocacy in speaking such words as "freedom," "consistent," and "standards." The use of the word "freedom" by Gates signifies a political connotation and infers a correlation between education and freedom. In 2008, the word "freedom" was not mentioned in his speech and the word "consistent" was only mentioned one time. The phrase "consistent standards" was used steadily throughout his 2014 speech (12 times), where it was not present in his 2008 speech at all. By 2014, it is evident that Gates is attempting to clarify and redeem the standards by infusing his own brand of rhetorical support in the midst of substantial publicized opposition to the Common Core.

These aforementioned speeches delivered by Gates represent his influence and power in the wake of debate over public education reform policy. In his unwavering support for the Common Core Standards, he does not mention the numerous inequalities that students face within our education system. Alternatively, he proclaimed with a simplified and blanket statement, education is the answer for equality in the United States. Thus, the implication by his support for curriculum standards is that these standards provide a direct correlation to the success of students in public schools and beyond. The content, as well as the context, of Gates' speeches provide us with a critical lens that underscores the significance of his use of language in conjunction with his social, economic, and cultural status. The hegemonic structure that surrounds Gates and his speeches, allow us to view these synergies as a force within the changing landscape of our education system. As a result of critically examining Bill Gates' speeches, this leads to a study of issues of public concern surrounding the Common Core Standards based on Gates' role in its implementation.

3.5 Gates and the Corporatization of Education Reform

This section addresses two inquiries that have arisen based on Bill Gates' advocacy and funding for education reform standards. The suppositions stated here, along with supporting evidence, are grounded in the language and actions of Gates and the Gates Foundation.

3.5.1 The Effect of Private Enterprise on United States Education Policy

In assessing how private enterprise affects United States education policy, an analysis of Bill Gates' speeches offers us a lens in examining this topic. In a rhetorical sense, a man of Bill Gates' economic and cultural capital is able to influence various leaders of industry in both public and private sectors through his speeches. As noted on the Gates Foundation website, Bill and Melinda Gates provide a clear statement on their position with regard to education:

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is committed to ensuring that all students in the United States have the opportunity to receive a high-quality education (The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2016b).

This is a strong statement for the foundation with an implication through word choices that they have some control over “ensuring” this opportunity for all students in the United States. The trial reforms beginning in 2000 led by Gates’ Foundation showed us how influential a man of his social prominence is able to invoke changes in education policy. The speeches delivered by Gates in 2008 and 2014 exhibited his overall power and influence on a long-standing and contentious issue such as state run education policy. His influence on education policy change emanates not only from his social and cultural capital, but from his economic capital as well.

Gates has proven to have political, social, economic, and cultural influence on society. However, the implementation of education policy cannot come to fruition without the consent of numerous organizations backing the initiative. Hence, the vast wealth of Gates and his philanthropic foundation has both an implied and very tangible impact on the latest controversial public education policy known as the Common Core Standards.

3.5.2 What is being done about socio-economic inequalities?

In relation to Gates’ discourse, he does not directly address issues of student abilities in the classroom. There seems to be an assumption within his oratory that all students will, in fact, learn at the same pace and in unison with one another based upon the standards administered in the classroom. This assumption begs the question: What is being done about social, racial, and economic inequalities? Gates presupposes that all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, welcome these new curriculum challenges and will therefore be more advanced learners as a result. Gates believes that with the effort of motivated and educated teachers, every student will

be a success with the Common Core Standards. There is no mention in either speech about students who may have socio-economic impediments that inhibit their learning capabilities despite a standard classroom measurement. As Gates argued in his 2014 speech that teachers are not being told how to teach these standards, but rather it is up to the teachers to determine the pedagogical approach in instructing these learning objectives in the classroom. In other words, Gates implied that student learning rests solely upon the shoulders of the teachers and the schools.

The fact that Gates spoke in generalities with regard to student socio-economic status, this lack of specificity whether intentional or otherwise, conveniently excludes him from the discussion on inequality among the student body. But rather, his rhetoric focused on education standards being the key to equality for all students. As noted previously, in his speech from 2008, Gates mentioned the word “equality” one time, noting that “Melinda and I believe that providing every child with a good education is the only path to **equality** in America” (Gates, 2008). In his speech from 2014, Gates mentioned the word “equal” in both the first sentence of his speech and the last sentence of his speech. The first sentence stated that “Public education is the single greatest instrument for **equal** opportunity in America” (Gates, 2014) and the closing sentence stated the following:

The Common Core isn’t just another policy debate; it’s a pivotal issue for the future. It will help prepare all our students for college and career – and that’s the best idea our country has for giving every child an **equal** chance (Gates, 2014, para. 41).

As evidenced in his speeches, there was no mention of the word “inequality.” Gates avoided this word because of the possibility of it invoking a negative reaction. It is a word that signifies marginalization within the social construct of public education. It also carries with it a history of events in the United States that invoked extreme emotions and actions, not only within our schools,

but in our communities as well. Thus, in order for Gates to reaffirm his position on the Common Core to the receptive audience, he chose a word that would promote a positive response through his efforts to persuade.

Supporters of the Common Core provide positive feedback. In a report by the Center for American Progress (2014), their conclusion was that “The Common Core State Standards hold promise for low-income students, students of color, English language learners, and students with disabilities, who traditionally perform significantly worse than their peers” (p. 1). This presumption was based on the fact that all students are being taught the same standards. The report goes on to claim that “The Common Core helps address inequity in education by ensuring all students are taught to the same high standards and held to the same rigorous expectations. This helps make sure that ZIP codes do not determine education quality” (p. 1). The contention is that with a standardized curriculum, students will be challenged by a rigorous and stimulating learning program which improves their motivation to learn and succeed regardless of socio-economic standing.

In noting other supporting discourse for Gates’ initiative, an article by Cindy Long (2013), the National Education Association has determined that there are valuable benefits to the Common Core. One of the benefits is that of promoting equality in the classroom. Citing comments from various teachers around the country, Long advocated that the Common Core advances equity because of the rigorous curriculum. Long (2013) noted that “If students from all parts of the country — affluent, rural, low-income or urban — are being held to the same rigorous standards, it promotes equity in the quality of education and the level of achievement gained.” Cheryl Mosier, a teacher from Colorado, noted that “we’re not going to have pockets of really high performing

kids in one area compared to another area where kids aren't working on the same level" (Long, 2013).

Although Gates' rhetoric does not touch upon these specific issues in terms of equality, supporters who are teachers of the Common Core are some of its biggest allies for a consistent curriculum of learning. Gates managed to use examples of teacher comments in his speeches and provide examples of economically poor schools that have gained success through the Common Core. It can be assumed that it is Gates' hope that more positive results and comments will emerge from the media instead of negative, anti-Common Core sentiment.

3.6 Theoretical Implications of Bill Gates' Rhetoric

As noted in Chapter One, Bourdieu, Foucault, and Gramsci all attest to the connection between language and power as crucial conduits for social construction and social change. The critical examination of Bill Gates' speeches on education reform provide a view of how elite white male discourse, along with social and economic capital from an individual who influences change in social policy. This study allows a viewing through a critical lens, the formation of a standardized United States education policy through the use of discourse and power. The implementation of social change cannot be realized without the recognition of such influences. In examining the theoretical conceptions of Foucault, change is a result of a discursive network of texts and people within institutions and organizations.

According to Foucault, power does not operate as a result of a single entity. As Foucault (1980) states, "...power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization...individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (p. 98). In correlating this statement to Gates and his network of partners, employees, and supporters in the Common Core effort, Gates did not create this education policy on his own, but rather he had a large team of people inside and

outside his Foundation that collectively brought this idea to fruition. The fact that he provided both financial and cultural capital to support this initiative speaks to the body of power that Gates formulated over many years. Relative to this, Foucault sees power as “a system of relations spread throughout the society, rather than simply as a set of relations between the oppressed and the oppressor” (Mills, 2004, p. 35). Hence, the relationship between power and society, as depicted through Gates, is a symbiotic courtship.

As noted in Foucault’s (1979) evaluation of education as being an “apparatus of uninterrupted examination” (p.186) and “woven into the school through a constantly repeated ritual of power” (p.186), the implementation of standardized curriculum in public schools represents Foucault’s appraisal in the clearest sense. Ball (2013) notes that Foucault deems the student as a visible entity within an invisible power structure of the school system and “the learner sees only the tasks and the tests which they must undertake” (p. 48). While Gates contends that standards are the future of student success, Foucault posits that standards imposed upon students ultimately divide them and segregate them into varying ranking levels, where some students are behind and others are ahead (Ball, 2013, p. 49). This lays in direct opposition to what Gates (and his supporters) proclaim with regard to a standardized education being the only pathway to equality among public education students. Although the curriculum that is taught in the classroom may be “equal” for all students with the Common Core, the difference for each student still lies within their abilities to learn that curriculum.

In line with Foucault, students are assessed by measurement and often confronted with change in order to weigh their development in the classroom. This practice breeds what Foucault calls “classification and normalization” in the classroom, which he deems as “the primary and fundamental character of the *norm*” (Ball, 2013, p. 51). Foucault proclaims that schooling presents

an iterative practice of “normalization” in which there is a distribution of ability along with a connected ranking order (Ball, 2013, p. 51). The concept of *ability* in the classroom is “an effect and articulation of the norm produced at the heart of schooling, the very point at which teaching could articulate a form of knowledge which related pedagogy to population, and classroom practice to a general theory of management, distribution, and entitlement” (Ball, 2013, p. 51).

In Gates’ view, the ability of students are ultimately measured by the pedagogical practices of the teacher. If there is not equality in the learning process, then the accountability rests with teaching. As mentioned in his rhetoric, Gates believes that every child has the capacity to learn the standards taught in the classroom, but it is the pedagogical practice that determines if the student learns these standards. Gates and his supporters claim that a standard curriculum is a great equalizer in the classroom; however, Foucault contends that a standardization would nonetheless divide the classroom based on a students’ ability to learn. There is still a division within the classroom based on learning capabilities of the individual learner. Foucault (1980) states that the individual learner is not “the vis-à-vis of power; it is...one of its prime effects” (p. 98). In essence, Foucault is saying that the individual learner is a representation of the power structures that developed the educational system.

This power/knowledge relation is indicative of the individualized thinking mind which has been historically predicated on some form of standardized education. Although the standard measurement of what is learned is equal within the application of the Common Core, the individual learner is ultimately the deciding factor in whether there remains a distinct difference in the classroom with regard to the ability to learn. As noted in Ball (2013), the educational system was founded on “a conception of the learner within the framework of liberal possessive individualism” whereby each person is in charge of their own capacities (p. 52). Thus, the individual capacities

of a student do not rest solely on the structure and uniformity of a curriculum. In fact, there is no clear evidence to prove a homogenized approach to education reform that will leave no child left behind in the learning process.

3.7 Conclusion

The power, authority, and dominance exhibited by Gates are evident throughout his speeches. The dominant power that he exudes through his discourse has made a profound impact on the social, political, economic, and cultural structure of our nation. The United States' education system continues to be a primary endeavor for his foundation, along with other global initiatives. It is in this examination, it is evident that Gates' speeches support hegemonic power structures and inequality through essentializing students, teachers, and administrators within the education system.

In essentializing students, Gates has proclaimed that one curriculum fits all students, without broaching any of the learning challenges students may face on a daily basis. The advocates' definition of high standards imposed upon all students, do not take into account student abilities in the classroom. If their ability to learn and grasp concepts in a pre-Common Core Standards environment were denigrated, then the argument for raising the standards on students who have already fallen behind would seem unrealistic in terms of perceived learning outcomes. In addition, Gates' discourse suggests a lack of teacher ability and quality methods in the classroom. There are generalizations made in his speeches alleging teacher incompetence if classrooms are not performing at a high level. Gates believes all students have the ability to learn; however, he proclaims that this outcome solely rests with the teachers' ability to administer the curriculum. And when he points to administrators who will not do what it takes to restructure their school systems, Gates is placing blame on these administrators for not taking the proper steps

needed for student and teacher success in their schools. All of these comments in Gates' speeches are examples of his essentialized view of education reform. Without considering the myriad of issues surrounding these contentious roles in education, Gates was able to illustrate the symptom of our education dysfunction through research data – poor student performance. Gates did not, however, articulate in his speeches how to address the root problems behind poor student performance, nor did he attempt to acknowledge their existence.

There are various ways in which to conduct a critical discourse analysis. The analysis conducted here focused on the hegemony within Gates' speech using principles from which van Dijk reveals. In an effort to expose the hegemonic characteristics of Gates' speech, such as those which link education to economic superiority and global competitiveness, an examination of key words and phrases was detailed, along with instances of opposing commentary on the education policy proposed and advocated by Gates. Although Gates did not himself author the Common Core Standards, it is evident by the analysis put forth that Gates exerted his authority and financial influence in executing an organized plan to overhaul the United States public education system.

In continuing to fund the implementation of this plan, Gates has gained many supporters through his foundation's endeavors. The fact that he is the richest man on the planet is a key factor in the magnitude of his power and authority to advance a plan such as this on a national scale. The influence that he wields is indicative of a power structure that has both economic and political elements, which continue to shape our education system and ultimately our society.

Chapter 4: The Education Reform Rhetoric of President Barack Obama

The topic of education reform in the United States has long been a primary component of political campaigns, particularly a presidential campaign. As previously noted in Chapter Three, one of the key figures in advancing the latest education reform policy is Bill Gates, but in looking at our political structure, we find that President Barack Obama and his administration have been and continue to be significant supporters of the Common Core Standards as well. As outlined in Chapter Two, the Office of the President has been historically an advocate for education reforms and the modification of public school policies. The Obama Administration is the first to see a standardized curriculum successfully administered on a nationwide scale in the form of the Common Core Standards. In addition, the Obama Administration has infused more financial funding into the United States public education system as a whole than any other presidential administration in history. President Obama and his administration succeeded in this endeavor from the beginning of his presidency in 2009 by inheriting an economy crippled by one of the worst financial crises in history. Thus, the infusion of money across all sectors of the economy, including education, was necessary in order to prevent further economic devastation.

This chapter explores the discourse of President Obama on the subject of education reform and examines his use of language and power in promoting change to public education policy on a national scale. A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of two speeches delivered by President Obama on education will expose and analyze the underlying hegemony within this form of communication. It is well known that the Office of the President of the United States is historically recognized, both nationally and globally, as a leader of economic, social, and education programs. The forthcoming exploration of language and power relations through the speeches of President Obama will reveal how the federal government affects United States public education policy.

The first speech analyzed is from a meeting with the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C. on March 10, 2009. The second speech is from the Signing of the “Every Student Succeeds Act” in Washington, D.C. on December 10, 2015. These are just two of many speeches President Obama has made with regard to education reform and his advocacy for change. These particular speeches were chosen because one represents an early speech and the other represents a later speech in Barack Obama’s Presidency. The speech delivered in 2009 is representative of Obama’s education ideology shortly after taking the Office of President and prior to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. This speech sets the stage for his anticipated education reform plans for his new administration. The speech delivered in 2015 highlights his final reform policy at the end of his term as President with the signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act. In order to understand the education rhetoric of President Obama, we must first explore his background and his rise through politics.

4.1 President Obama: The Rise of a Minority Leader

On November 4, 2008, Senator Barack Obama made political history when he was elected as the first African American President of the United States. This was not only a political milestone, but also a cultural milestone for the United States given the nation’s contentious past with minority populations. This new historic era of American politics held the prospect of a brighter future in the wake of a devastating economic collapse along with the shrinking of a segment of the population known as the middle-class. The newly elected President Obama assured his anxious fellow Americans that there was indeed a light at the end of this dark tunnel that crippled the nation’s financial security. The “hope and change” grassroots campaign that led Obama to the White House was certain that all promises would be delivered and financial recovery was imminent on all levels of society during his presidency.

When studying President Obama's rise through United States politics, he is a man born into a unique environment that included parents who were of different races. Obama's mother was a white woman from Kansas, and his father was a black man from Kenya, Africa. Both parents were well educated and met while attending the University of Hawaii in the early 1960s (Miller Center for Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2016). Obama was born in Hawaii, where he spent the first five years of his life. Later, his mother divorced his father and married an Indonesian. Obama then lived in Indonesia from the age of six to ten (Miller Center for Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2016). Obama's father went on to study at Harvard University and he eventually returned to Kenya. From the age of ten, Obama was raised primarily by his mother's parents in Hawaii, where he attended a local private preparatory school known as Punahou (Miller Center for Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2016).

The Punahou School paved the way for a continued high quality education and eventually an esteemed political career for Obama. In his first two years as an undergraduate, he attended Occidental College in Los Angeles and then completed his studies in 1983 at Columbia University in New York City with a degree in political science (Miller Center for Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2016). In 1988, Obama enrolled in law school at Harvard University where he excelled academically and also became president of the prestigious *Harvard Law Review* legal journal (Miller Center for Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2016). This elite path of education allowed Obama's ambitions to flourish as a political leader on multiple levels. Obama's leadership was exercised through his involvement with working for a civil rights law firm, aligning himself with Chicago's African American community, becoming a state senator in Illinois, and then on to becoming a U.S. Senator in Washington, which eventually turned into a successful bid

for the Oval Office in 2008. Obama was to be recognized throughout his presidency as a strong advocate and champion of new education policies and programs.

4.2 The Obama Administration's Advocacy for Education Reform

As the incoming President of the United States in 2009, Obama was met with resistance from both political parties on many issues; however, education reform continued to be a contentious topic that mandated change from all sides of the political aisle. The disbursement of federal funds to primary sectors of the economy was at the forefront of Obama's first order of business upon taking the oath of office. He inherited an economic crisis from the previous Bush Administration and sought to improve the economy with funding and policies that would lead to economic recovery. As part of this recovery process, the newly appointed Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, provided support the Obama Administration needed in order to manage funding to programs that would initiate education recovery. During this time, the education sector was struggling with teacher layoffs and state budget deficits due to the severe national economic recession. With the advent of Bill Gates' support and financial backing of education reform, the Common Core Standards were in the process of being developed for an expeditious implementation. Thus, in conjunction with this curriculum standards initiative, the program known as the Race to the Top (RTT) was executed by the Obama administration. This program became the springboard for Obama's focus on three major areas of education: early childhood learning, elementary and secondary education (K-12), and higher education (post-secondary).

4.2.1 Race to the Top

On February 17, 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed into law in answer to one of the worst recessions in our nation's history. This financial stimulus package also included an education policy known as the Race to the Top program. This program was

introduced as an education reform policy that would provide funding to schools across the country with the stipulation that they would implement and enforce a consistent set of learning standards (The White House, Education, 2016). Those standards are widely known today as the Common Core Standards. The Obama Administration touts this program as a historical breakthrough in education policy, whereby the “Race to the Top has ushered in significant change in our education system, particularly in raising standards and aligning policies and structures to the goal of college and career readiness” (The White House, Education, 2016). By encouraging states to participate via incentives, school systems have been striving to meet the requirements set forth in the policy in order to receive more federal funding dollars. As a result, funding has been disbursed to school systems in 19 states in the amount of over \$4 billion (The White House, Education, 2016). The remaining 31 states have either not adopted a set of common standards in their curriculum, not applied for this funding, or applied to the funding but were declined.

4.2.2 Early Childhood Education

The Race to the Top program was the Obama Administration’s first step in a continuing commitment to implement changes to our nation’s education system. In 2013, President Obama laid out a plan to improve the quality of early childhood education by stating that he is “committed to a comprehensive early learning agenda for America’s children that begins at birth and provides the support and services needed to set them on a path of success in school and in life” (The White House, Office of Press Secretary, 2013). With this early childhood education plan, his strategy focused on providing funding to states that uphold quality standards in their pre-school programs using three primary tenets, which include: “state-level standards for early learning, qualified teachers for all preschool classrooms, and a plan to implement comprehensive data and assessment systems” (The White House, Office of Press Secretary, 2013). This plan, according to the Obama

Administration, was in answer to the nation's perceived less than favorable standing as compared with other advanced countries around the world. Statistics from "the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that the United States ranks 28th out of 38 countries for the share of four-year olds enrolled in early childhood education" (Slack, 2013).

4.2.3 Elementary and Secondary Education

Research into the advocacy for elementary and secondary education finds that no other presidential administration has implemented more policy change and education reform than the Obama Administration. If we look closer at the Obama Administration's overall support for K-12 education, we see that in addition to the Race to the Top program, initiatives such as Reforming No Child Left Behind, High School Redesign, the ConnectED program, and the newly implemented Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 are imbedded in his reform as well. In his efforts to reform the No Child Left Behind policy, President Obama met with resistance from Congress to take action in modifying this plan in order to reinitialize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The NCLB was viewed as a broken policy that enabled schools to "lower their standards; emphasized punishing failure over rewarding success; focused on absolute scores, rather than recognizing growth and progress; and prescribed a pass-fail, one-size-fits-all series of interventions for schools that miss their goals" (The White House, Education, 2016a). In 2010, the administration then enacted a waiver system for states that wanted to opt-out of the strict policy. Again, in order to receive flexibility from the NCLB policy, states had to "adopt and have a strong plan to implement college- and career-ready standards" (The White House, Education, 2016a). The waiver also allowed schools to administer programs that best suit their individualized needs based on student performance factors. Unlike the one-size-fits-all strategy of the original NCLB plan, the Obama Administration claimed that this addendum provided states with reasonable

accountability measures in an effort to improve student outcomes. As of 2015, a total of 41 states were approved for the NCLB waiver. This was to become Obama's first step in ultimately redefining the No Child Left Behind policy.

The High School Redesign program, according to the Obama Administration, is an eight-pronged plan with the intent of spurring student creativity and innovation in an environment that would grow student knowledge more aptly for the future demands of career and life. The basis of this program is for school districts to utilize federal, state, and local resources to "transform the high school experience for America's youth through a whole school redesign effort" (The White House, Press Room, 2013). The argument of the Obama Administration is that this program would spark the following positive changes in all school districts around the country (The White House, Press Room, 2013):

- Redesign academic content and instructional practices
- Personalize learning opportunities
- Provide academic and wrap-around support services
- Provide high-quality career and college exploration and counseling
- Offer opportunities to earn postsecondary credit
- Provide career-related experiences or competencies
- Strategically use learning time in more meaningful ways
- Provide evidence-based professional development

As a result of this initiative, several schools systems across the country began the process of transforming K-12 education in hopes of meeting the perceived demands of the 21st century and beyond. The Obama Administration boasts several examples of this teaching and learning redesign in Austin, Texas; Brooklyn, New York; San Diego, California; Reynoldsburg, Ohio; and Loving, New Mexico (U.S. Department of Education, Press Office, 2013).

In the summer of 2013, President Obama announced a plan designed to enable Internet connectivity and provide needed technology resources in every classroom across the nation by the year 2018 (The White House, Education, 2016a). This plan, called the ConnectED initiative, was

created to prepare students “with the skills they need to get good jobs and compete with other countries” (The White House, Education, 2016a). The premise for this plan is that in order to provide United States students with a competitive edge, teaching and learning “relies increasingly on interactive, personalized learning experiences driven by new technology” (The White House, Education, 2016a). The goal of the Obama Administration was to deliver “Internet connectivity and educational technology into classrooms, and into the hands of teachers trained on its advantages” (The White House, Education, 2016a). The President called on state and local business leaders and school districts to support this plan. By 2014, commitments by the Federal Communication Commission and the private sector were in place in order to make this plan a reality (The White House, Education, 2016). Major technology corporations such as Apple, Microsoft, AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon have pledged their support for this plan with a promise “to collectively connect 20 million more students [with Internet access] over the next two years” (The White House, Education, 2016).

What began as a “Blueprint for Reform” of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2010, ended with the enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed into law a policy that overrides the preceding No Child Left Behind law as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This new policy attempts to reaffirm the commitment and reform efforts of the Obama Administration held through his tenure in office. The ESSA claims to break free of the strict one-size-fits-all solutions implemented through the NCLB and according to the Obama Administration, provides results that focus on the individual needs of school districts and their communities to produce more positive results (Executive Office of the President, 2015). The primary tenets of this act included initiatives that were built on the Obama Administration’s previous reform efforts and

their continued support for those strategies, which consist of the following (Executive Office of the President, 2015, p. 9):

- Establish or expand access to high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families, building from the Administration's Preschool Development Grants program.
- Develop, refine, and replicate innovative and ambitious reforms to close the achievement gap in America's schools, similar to the Administration's existing i3 program.
- Expand incentives to prepare, develop, and advance effective teachers and principals in America's schools.
- Expands flexibility for districts to offer all of their students a well-rounded education, narrow the course equity gap, especially in STEM subjects, and invest in learning technologies and open educational resources.
- Leverage resources to address the significant challenges faced by students and families living in high-poverty communities through the Promise Neighborhoods effort, supporting a continuum of services from early learning through college.
- Expand support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students.
- Continued support for Magnet schools designed to eliminate racial isolation, with added emphasis on socioeconomic status as a means to support comprehensive integration.

With the implementation of this newly revised commitment to elementary and secondary education, the Obama Administration highlighted the intended improvements and positive results that they expect to shape the future of United States education. The Administration argued for a strong P-12 school system whereby they stated it “is an economic imperative for working and middle class Americans – and for our entire country. Every student deserves the opportunity to rise as far as their hard work and initiative will take them” (Executive Office of the President, 2015, p. 10).

4.2.4 Higher Education

Another major education priority for President Obama has been to increase the affordability of higher education for students and their families. The tuition and fees for colleges continue to skyrocket; however, the Obama Administration has developed several policies in order to help middle-class families mitigate these expenses. Based on loan information data, 2010 graduates left college “owing an average of more than \$26,000” (The White House, Education,

2016b). In addition, the Obama Administration claimed the nation's student loan debt has surpassed credit card debt for the first time in history (The White House, Education, 2016b). The major components of Obama's money saving plan for students and their families included:

- Increasing the annual maximum amount for Pell Grants to \$5,730 for the 2014-2015 academic year (an increase of \$1,000 since 2008).
- Helping students manage loan debt with a repayment program based on income after graduation
- Beginning in 2009, establishing the American Opportunity Tax Credit in the amount of \$10,000 to relieve tax burdens for families paying for college tuition
- Federal student loan interest rates have remained low for affordable student repayment (i.e. Stafford Loans have remained at 3.4%)

In addition to these money saving policy changes for students and their families, the Obama Administration also proposed a policy known as America's College Promise (The White House, Education, 2016b). The intention of this policy was to grant free tuition to students completing two years of higher education at a community college. Furthermore, another plan put forth by the Obama Administration known as the Trade Adjustment Community College and Career Training program was geared toward training students for industry-based positions (The White House, Education, 2016b). Based on data from 2013, the federal government has claimed to award over \$2 billion in grants to institutions supporting this initiative by providing 164,000 individuals with support (The White House, Education, 2016b). Of these participants, "88 percent have either completed the program or continued the program for a second year" (The White House, Education, 2016b).

In 2014, the Obama Administration, in combination with the Department of Education, created a new Institute for Education Sciences (The White House, Education, 2016b). The institute, known as the Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness (CAPR), has been "working to strengthen the research, evaluation, and support of college readiness efforts across the nation" (The

White House, Education, 2016b). The Obama Administration contends that this institute serves a vital function with regard to “documenting current practices in developmental English and math education to identify innovative instructional practices that improve student success” (The White House, Education, 2016b).

Additionally, in 2015, the Obama Administration “proposed the American Technical Training Fund to award programs that have strong employer partnerships and include work-based learning opportunities, provide accelerated training, and are scheduled to accommodate part-time work” (The White House, Education, 2016b). The intent of this program was to fund “100 centers to help high-potential, low-wage workers” to acquire the proper skills to work in middle-class jobs, such as advanced manufacturing, energy, and information technology; thereby, continually providing local employers with highly trained skilled workers who can fill vacant positions in vital sectors of industry (The White House, Education, 2016b).

The actions taken during Obama’s tenure as President demonstrate that he and his administration have a resounding advocacy for education reform. Obama has been clearly committed to changes in policy that he claims will promote new methods in producing positive results for the teaching and learning process in our public schools. The education reform policies achieved through the Obama Administration have surpassed all other presidential administrations in terms of continuous support and implementation. One of the major themes throughout these policies has been the support for so-called higher standards. As we further examine Obama’s discourse on education reform, we find his consistency with advocating for the Common Core State Standards as well.

4.3 The Obama Administration’s Advocacy for Common [Core State] Standards

In addition to being the first step in a continuing commitment to education reform, the Race to the Top initiative of 2009 was also the initial indicator that the Obama Administration was in support of the Common Core Standards. The words “Common Core” are not specifically mentioned in relation to this initiative; however, it is strongly implied within the requirements necessary to receive funding through this program. As outlined through the description on the White House website, there are four major areas of reform contingent with this funding policy:

- Development of rigorous standards and better assessments
- Adoption of better data systems to provide schools, teachers, and parents with information about student progress
- Support for teachers and school leaders to become more effective
- Increased emphasis and resources for the rigorous interventions needed to turn around the lowest-performing schools

Although the administration’s support for the Common Core State Standards may be interpreted as being strong; it may also be viewed as lacking specificity. The fact that the Common Core Standards implementation soon followed the Race to the Top initiative in 2009 indicates that the federal requirement for “development of rigorous standards” was not a coincidence. As stated in the Obama Administration’s Executive Summary of the Race to the Top program (2009), we see that the Common Core Standards is not mentioned by name, but rather worded as simply “common standards” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009):

Common set of K-12 standards means a set of content standards that define what students must know and be able to do and that are substantially identical across all States in a consortium. A State may supplement the common standards with additional standards, provided that the additional standards do not exceed 15 percent of the State's total standards for that content area (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 12).

The discourse invoked, but did not specifically name, the Common Core Standards by requiring that the standards “are substantially identical across all States in a consortium” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This program left little room for alternatives where a supplemental program cannot “exceed fifteen percent of the State’s total standards” within a given content area (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The consistent theme in education policy speeches delivered by President Obama is one that advocates for a set of “common standards” in our nation’s public schools; however, not once has the President mentioned specifically the Common Core State Standards by name. Given that, since its inception, “the term Common Core has become highly politicized...even though states voluntarily adopted the Standards, some critics allege that the measure is an example of federal overreach” (Klein, 2014). This omission can be considered a way to politically evade linking the federal government with the implementation of these standards. This exclusion is an example of his rhetorical strategy in not associating the federal government with mandated standards. In examining several of his statements over the years since the inception of the Common Core, his support of these standards seems quite direct.

As demonstrated in the following statements from 2009 through 2014 by President Obama, his advocacy for standards in public schools were made clear without actually using the words Common Core. Instead of mentioning Common Core, President Obama used phrases such as, “high standards,” “standards for teaching and learning,” and “raise expectations and performance” in conveying his message of support for a standard curriculum.

In President Obama’s first speech to a joint session of Congress, delivered on February 24, 2009, he openly advocated for school reform and touts federal support for higher standards. Obama stated:

But we know that our schools don't just need more resources. They need more reform. That is why this budget creates new incentives for teacher performance; pathways for advancement, and rewards for success. We'll invest in innovative programs that are already helping schools meet **high standards** and close achievement gaps (Obama, 2009). In a weekly address on the Blueprint for Reforming No Child Left Behind in 2010, he stated how "the federal government can play a leading role encouraging the reforms and higher standards":

What this plan recognizes is that while the federal government can play a leading role in encouraging the reforms and **high standards** we need, the impetus for that change will come from states, and from local schools and school districts. So, yes, we set a high bar - - but we also provide educators the flexibility to reach it (Obama, 2010).

In his 2011 State of the Union speech, he specifically pointed out that these "standards" were not developed by the federal government; however, it became evident in later speeches that he implies that his administration was responsible for this initiative. Obama stated:

For less than 1 percent of what we spend on education each year, it has led over 40 states to raise their **standards for teaching and learning**. And **these standards** were developed, by the way, not by Washington, but by Republican and Democratic governors throughout the country (Obama, 2011).

In a speech given at the Democratic National Convention in 2012, Obama contends the implementation of curriculum standards across the country was in answer to "our call," which seems to imply that his administration was responsible. He stated:

For the first time in a generation nearly every state has answered our call to raise their **standards for teaching and learning** (Obama, 2012).

In the 2013 State of the Union Address, Obama implies that the federal government “convinced” states to develop “higher standards”:

Four years ago, we started Race to the Top, a competition that convinced almost every state to develop **smarter curricula and higher standards**, all for about 1 percent of what we spend on education each year (Obama, 2013).

In the 2014 State of the Union Address, Obama noted that the Race to the Top program “helped states” elevate standards:

Race to the Top, with the help of governors from both parties, has helped states **raise expectations and performance**. ... Some of this change is hard. It requires everything from more challenging curriculums and more demanding parents, to better support for teachers.

The passages above provide a basis through which to view the discourse of Obama’s support for common [core] standards; they also offer a clear view of political discourse from an argumentative perspective. The aforementioned comments are just some of the ones made by President Obama over the years in backing standards in education; there are many more consistent remarks in numerous other speeches. These statements disclose the politicized effect on President Obama, his administration, and the federal government in using the more direct terminology of Common Core. This signifies that the administration and the federal government have avoided specifically admitting to endorsing this particular standard curriculum because a stigma of federal intervention in this type of reform could fuel an already opposing political and social base. The mere omission of these words allows the government to distance itself from any backlash with regard to federal involvement in traditionally state run public education policy.

4.4 A Critical Discourse Analysis of President Obama's Speeches

As with the analysis in Chapter Three of Bill Gates' speeches on education reform, this chapter will explore the same principles in an examination of two speeches from President Obama using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Again, the primary interest and motivation of a CDA is to examine persistent social issues in an attempt to better understand the complex relationship between dominance and discourse (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). Based on the political discourse analysis methodology used by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012), Obama's speeches are a form of political discourse; hence, in this instance, viewed "as primarily a form of argumentation...more specifically practical argumentation, argumentation for or against particular ways of acting, argumentation that can ground decision" (p. 1). To analyze text with a critical eye, we must "focus on how discourses, as ways of representing, provide agents with reasons for action" (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, p. 1).

As Gee (2002) contends, there is reciprocity between language and context, whereby "language then always simultaneously reflects and constructs the situation or context in which it is used" (p. 82). An examination of President Obama's language shows us that "situations, when they involve communicative social interaction, always involve these connected elements: a semiotic aspect, an activity aspect, a material aspect, a political aspect, and a sociocultural aspect" (p. 82-83). These elements comprise "an interrelated network," whereby these elements are both giving and receiving meaning concurrently from one another (Gee, 2002, p. 83). Through Obama's speeches, we will see how language builds and rebuilds our world on a continual and active basis "used in tandem with actions, interactions, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing" (p. 11).

In order to gain perspective on these aforesaid concepts, a Critical Discourse Analysis is will be conducted on President Obama's speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in

2009 (see Appendix E for full text) and his speech on signing the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 (see Appendix F for full text). This analysis will provide insight on how political discourse and power structures play a vital role in shaping the social and cultural landscape of a nation, and in turn, how these landscapes shape discourse, particularly as it relates to Obama's rhetoric on education reform.

This inquiry begins with an examination of the various elements that surround the context of President Obama's speeches and then studies the properties within the content of his speeches through lexical analysis. As with the analysis of Bill Gates' speeches, consideration of such characteristics as accessibility, setting, timing of speeches and participant roles, along with properties of the speech itself, including genres, speech acts, argumentation, and others will be analyzed. A study of the text that primarily exhibits the dominance of power through its discursive practice will be shown. These components of Obama's speeches will provide a lens from which to dissect his persuasive and argumentative rhetorical techniques. This analysis is also conducted from the point of view of those who are in opposition to Obama's education advocacy.

4.3.1 Accessibility

As noted in Chapter Three, accessibility relates to the speaker using his power to control the context in which the speech is given along with access to venues that promote his rhetoric (van Dijk, 1993, p. 270). Just four months prior to his 2009 speech, Barack Obama had been elected to the highest office of the land. As President of the United States, the power that Obama possesses on both a national and global scale allows for him to be easily recognized and to gain press coverage under any circumstance. The fact that Obama was the main speaker at the meeting of the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in 2009 denotes that he had primary control over the context in which the event took place.

At the time of his 2015 speech, Obama and his staff organized a meeting to mark the official signing of a new education policy: one that was considered to be the last major education policy change during his tenure as President. Consequently, this was a media conference that included members of legislature, school children, and members of the Obama Administration staff as notable attendees. This event is representative of the power the President wields in order to gain media attention relevant to changes in policy.

4.3.2 Setting and Timing of Speeches

When evaluating the setting and timing of President Obama's speeches, evidence of how features of a speech setting enhance the power and authority of a speaker is clear (van Dijk, 1993, p. 270-271). The validation of speaker authority is enhanced by such characteristics as location, prestigious props, media coverage, and the presence of other notable figures (van Dijk, 1993, p. 271). If we examine the location of President Obama's speeches in both 2009 and 2015, they are delivered in locations notable for high profile presidential media coverage.

The location of the 2009 speech took place in Washington, D.C., which is both President Obama's home while occupying the Oval Office and the nation's political capital. The venue of the speech takes place at the Washington Marriott Metro Center. Because these locations are in the political capital of the country, these Washington, D.C. settings indicate that he automatically gains a large amount of media coverage, both locally and on a national scale. As one of his first major speeches as President during the economic crisis, Obama received newspaper, television, and internet media coverage for this speech. In addition, the speech was given just two months after Obama was sworn in as President of the United States and therefore, people were greatly interested in his stance on education reform and the economy. Additionally, it was delivered just four months after Bill Gates made his initial speech on education reform at *A Forum on Education*

in America in Seattle. Attendees of the conference included members of President Obama's staff and business leaders from the local and national Hispanic community.

The U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce allowed President Obama to speak to one of the most influential organizations in the nation. Due to the state of the nation's economy at the time, it was politically advantageous to rally such an important and prominent group, which also represents the nation's largest minority - Hispanics. This leading organization "advocates on behalf of nearly 4.1 million Hispanic-owned businesses that together, contribute in excess of \$661 billion to the American economy each year (U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 2016).

The location of the 2015 speech also took place in the nation's political capital, Washington, D.C. This conference was held at the Eisenhower Building and included a range of attendees from elementary school students to politicians, all in support of this new reform policy. The attendance of several children from Kenmore Middle School in Arlington, Virginia, along with the spotlight on one successful student from that school provided a backdrop for the signing of this policy. In addition, legislative leaders who helped the President pass this policy were also in attendance. The press conference commemorating the signing of this new education plan signified his last efforts to implement significant education reform before leaving office.

4.3.3 Genre

In examining this category, President Obama clearly has distinct entrance to a genre only he and his colleagues are allowed to participate in due to political status (van Dijk, 1993, p. 271). In addressing education reform, the genre of this discourse is categorized as political discourse. Because of his previous political role as a U.S. Senator, Obama was not new to the world of education reform discourse. However, if Obama did not climb national political ranks to the highest office in the nation, his voice would not be as prominent or powerful in the education

reform arena. As President of the United States, the office automatically possesses substantial powers in decision making that ultimately affects the nation and the globe.

4.3.4 Communicative Acts and Social Meanings

Through his speeches we see that Obama “locally expresses or signals various social meanings and categories of social interaction” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 271). In his introduction of the 2009 speech, an informal, yet polite, decorum is exhibited by Obama to the attendees (“Thank you. Si se puede.”). In opening with “Yes, we can” (in Spanish), Obama appealed to his Hispanic audience using his famous presidential campaign catch phrase and began his speech with the following statement:

Thank you. Si se puede.

Thank you. Thank you so much. Please, everybody have a seat. And I appreciate such a warm welcome. Some of you I've gotten a chance to know; many of you I'm meeting for the first time. But the spirit of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the **desire to create jobs and provide opportunity** to people who sometimes **have been left out** -- that's exactly what this administration is about. That's the **essence of the American Dream**. And so I'm very proud to have a chance to speak with all of you (Obama, 2009b, para. 1).

By leading with the words “desire to create jobs” and “provide opportunity,” Obama is appealing to the minorities in the audience. Obama is emphasizing that he wants to “provide opportunity” to those who “have been left out” with a focus on the ideological phrase “American Dream.” These phrases are used to draw on the audience’s beliefs relating to the promise of American opportunity for all. Those in attendance are expected to have the power and ability to support the changes outlined in Obama’s speech with regard to public education policy.

In his introduction of the 2015 speech, Obama began with a formal “Welcome” greeting. Obama then made a personal connection to a local student whom he looks towards as an example of secondary education achievement in order to support his policy. Obama began with the following:

Welcome to the White House. First of all, I want to thank Antonio for being such an outstanding role model. Back in 2011 -- when he was much shorter -- I visited Kenmore Middle School and saw firsthand their great work helping students like Antonio achieve their potential. And that’s why we’re here today (Obama, 2015, para. 1).

By leading with a specific case of how a local middle school is helping students achieve, Obama is setting the stage for why the signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act is taking place. In providing a tangible example, it was a way for Obama to validate the legitimacy of his policy to the public. The opening statement he provided here is consistent with his statements from the speech made in 2009 (and others) with regard to legitimizing policy through detailed examples.

4.3.5 Participant Positions and Roles

On a professional level, his primary social identity since 2008 has been that of President of the United States. Other identities associated with Obama’s status have been that of a former U.S. Senator, a lawyer, and a former professor of law. On a personal level, he is the father of two high school aged children with a vested interest in his children’s academic future. Despite growing up in the care of a single parent and grandparents, Obama’s socioeconomic status was consistently middle-class. As noted previously, Obama received a high quality education and further occupied a career in law, which is typically associated with financial stability and even wealth.

An examination of Obama’s social distinctiveness, reveals that it is not only his role as President that influences engagements and methods of his speeches, but also his identity as a

member of dominant African American male elites. His privileged status as an Ivy League college graduate, a lawyer, a U.S. Senator, and then as President, has placed him in the upper echelon of society's black male leaders. As the first African American male President of the United States, President Obama's status is significant on both a gender level and a racial level. In having been elected to the highest office in the land, he is now part of an elite class of powerful male figures in United States history.

4.3.6 Speech Acts

The Obama speeches contain the primary elements of a speech act, principally consisting of both assertions and desires for the state of public education. When looking at the words in Obama's speech from 2009, at the heart of his declarations is the claim that in order for America to be a valued global leader, there must be improvement in the nation's education system. Obama also makes the connection between "economic progress" and "educational achievement" whereas one cannot be attained without the other. Obama stated:

America will not remain true to its highest ideals -- and America's place as a global economic leader will be put at risk...if we don't do a far better job than we've been doing of educating our sons and daughters; unless we give them the knowledge and skills they need in this new and changing world.

For we know that **economic progress** and **educational achievement** have always gone hand in hand in America (Obama, 2009b, para. 5).

In an effort to address the current issues of public education, Obama appealed once again to the ideology of the American Dream. He made the claim that every parent wishes their child to be more educated and more successful than they were. He spoke in a definitive voice in terms of what must be done to improve schools across the country in the way of "new reforms." Obama prefaced

these statements by painting a grim future, for both education and economics in the United States, if the changes he is advocating for are not made swiftly. This represents his power and dominance as President in presenting both the problem and solution to his audience. Obama stated:

I think you'd all agree that the time for finger-pointing is over. The time for holding us -- holding ourselves accountable is here. **What's required** is not simply new investments, but new reforms. **It's time** to expect more from our students. **It's time** to start rewarding good teachers, stop making excuses for bad ones. **It's time** to demand results from government at every level. **It's time** to prepare every child, everywhere in America, to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world (Obama, 2009b, para. 14).

By using such definitive statements as “what’s required,” and “it’s time,” Obama exerted his cultural and political capital as a way to promote modifying the national education system. Within the context of Obama’s speech, there are a multiplicity of issues and approaches to these issues that he outlines for improving the state of education in the United States. The definitive terms that Obama used implies that his assertions and assumptions regarding the effect of education on economic growth is directly correlated to our global standing. In exerting his Presidential authority, Obama also asserted that he and his administration knows what is best for each states’ educational needs. As the newly elected President, Obama’s assertions lend themselves to validity claims in which, “the claim that an action (or proposed action) is right in the sense of being in accordance with norms of action (practical argumentation) and the claim that the speaker is speaking truthfully or sincerely” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, p. 98). Hence, Obama exerted authority in social, cultural, and economic spaces due to his newly prestigious status as both a national and global political leader.

The focus of Obama's 2015 speech was to mark the signing of a bipartisan education reform policy known as the Every Student Succeeds Act. In addition, Obama asserted that these standards also provide students with a challenging curriculum needed to be successful in college and career. His declaration in using phrases such as "whether our kids are prepared," "so we need to build," "we've got to learn what works," and "we've got to get rid of the stuff that doesn't work" spoke to his perceived command of the issue and the depth of his influence. In using these terms in his speech, he was telling his audience he is an authority on what students need and what the educational system as a whole needs. Obama proclaimed:

We're going to have to have our young people master not just the basics but also become critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. And our competitive advantage depends on **whether our kids are prepared** to seize the opportunities for tomorrow. **So we need to build** on the momentum that has already been established. **We've got to learn what works** and do more of that, and **we've got to get rid of the stuff that doesn't work**. And that's exactly what the Every Student Succeeds Act does (Obama, 2015, para. 13).

Obama goes on to illustrate that the high-achieving student in the audience, Antonio, is an example of how this policy works for students in helping them to achieve more. This real-life case promotes Obama's assertions in that this is "what we want every single child in America to have" and affirms his actions in implementing this education policy. By acknowledging the drawbacks of the education system, where we have allowed students to "slip through the cracks" and not receive "the resources that they need in the classroom," these comments signal accountability on the part of government and paves the way for Obama's Administration to take action in resolving these issues. Obama argued:

But one of the reasons Antonio is thriving is he's got great teachers and a great principal at Kenmore. They saw that spark in him, and, like all great educators, they're helping him to harness his energy and his curiosity and his talents.

And that's what we want every single child in America to have. We just want to give them a chance. And so many of them are full of that same talent and drive, but we let them slip through the cracks, or we're not creative enough in thinking about how they can be engaged, or **they just don't have the resources that they need in the classroom**, or they fell behind early because they didn't get the support that they needed given the tough circumstances they were born into (Obama, 2015, para. 21).

As with his speech from 2009, Obama continued to exert his cultural and economic capital, which supports higher standards in education. Obama simplified the focus on public education as being tied to economic growth and stability; however, he did not take into account the many factors involved in achieving equality in the classroom beyond higher education standards. In addition, Obama only mentioned the word "equality" once in his 2009 speech and vaguely mentions the environmental challenges that ultimately affect student learning outcomes in the classroom by noting "the tough circumstances they were born into." The numerous socioeconomic factors such as poverty, violence, drugs, and family dysfunctions that may inhibit the intellectual growth of students are not specifically addressed by Obama.

4.3.7 Macro Semantics: Topics

As with many high profile political leaders, Obama possesses the power to "define and redefine problems and situations" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 273). His 2009 speech reflects a theme for "raising standards" on education in both elementary and secondary levels. Other key topics broached in his speech included economic stability, early childhood education, improving teacher

quality, supporting high quality teachers, and raising our competitiveness against other nations. In President Obama's effort to focus on education, he first recognizes the overarching issue of the nation's financial dilemma and proceeds to build upon that topic as segue to education reform. Obama stated that we must "see this country through difficult times" and that we need to "steer our nation's economy through a crisis unlike anything that we have seen in our time." He then points to education policy and strategies in alleviating the economic crisis over time. One of the methods Obama mentioned was an investment in early childhood education programs. He used a general comment on what "studies show" and the economic results of such a program. At the macro semantic level, this was his attempt to define the issues surrounding the need for more education reforms and justification for change. He pleaded:

This isn't just about keeping an eye on our children, it's about educating them. Studies show that children in **early childhood education programs** are more likely to score higher in reading and math, more likely to graduate from high school and attend college, more likely to hold a job, and more likely to earn more in that job (Obama, 2009b, para. 16).

His comments also spoke of rewarding and supporting teachers and administrators in the school systems. Obama laid out a multi-tiered plan for reform, which included "recruiting, preparing, and rewarding outstanding teachers." In the midst of numerous layoffs across the nation, Obama pledged to prevent teacher layoffs with proper financial support. Although he stated that the nation cannot afford to lose teachers, at the same time he implied the economic repercussions of teachers losing their jobs. Obama advocated:

That's why our Recovery Act **will ensure that hundreds of thousands of teachers and school personnel are not laid off** -- because those Americans are not only doing jobs they

can't afford to lose, they're rendering a service our nation cannot afford to lose, either (Obama, 2009b, para. 24) .

Obama also called for an increase in teachers to service our education system across the United States. This was an attempt at promoting the profession in hopes that people would realize the new- found appreciation teachers would bring to the economic structure, as well as the education structure. His arguments were apparent regarding America's future and the vital role of teachers in being crucial to that future, as he pleaded with his audience to "join the teaching profession." Obama was describing, in what he portrayed, as critical turning points in the economic disaster with regard to education. In effect, Obama was making the connection between education and economic prosperity in the wake of the current financial crisis of the time. This tactic allowed his audience to view his advocacy as not only an education reform policy, but as an economic reform policy as well with an appeal to "serve our country in our classrooms." Obama appealed:

America's future depends on its teachers. And so today, I'm calling on a new generation of Americans to step forward and serve our country in our classrooms. If you want to make a difference in the life of our nation, if you want to make the most of your talents and dedication, if you want to make your mark with a legacy that will endure -- then **join the teaching profession** (Obama, 2009b, para. 25).

The primary topic in Obama's 2015 speech reflected his support of the newly enacted Every Student Succeeds Act and why he believed this policy benefits our public education system. Other topics included in his speech relate to political struggles in passing this policy along with reflections on the No Child Left Behind policy. Since this new policy overrode the NCLB program, Obama believed the much-needed changes were now in place. In advocating for the benefits of this policy, Obama stated that it offered students the support needed to succeed at

college and career by “holding everybody to high standards for teaching and learning.” Obama made the claim that this bill reaffirms the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, that every student regardless of where they come from, deserves a chance at the American Dream. Obama contended:

...this law focuses on a national goal of **ensuring that all of our students graduate prepared for college and future careers**. It builds on the reforms that have helped us make so much progress already, holding everybody to **high standards for teaching and learning**, empowering states and school districts to develop their own strategies for improvement, dedicating resources to our most vulnerable children.

...we reaffirm that fundamental American ideal that **every child**, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, **deserves the chance to make out of their lives what they will** (Obama, 2015, para. 16).

Although Obama did not mention the words “equality” or “inequality” in his 2015 speech, he implied that this new education policy will support education equality in the classroom. He also made the statement that this policy “fixes” broken elements of the No Child Left Behind policy. Similar to Bill Gates, Obama simplifies the problem, and with his own policies claims to adhere a “fix” with more reforms. He claimed:

...this bill makes long-overdue **fixes** to the last education law, **replacing the one-size fits-all approach to reform** with a commitment to provide every student with a well-rounded education. It creates real partnerships between the states, which will have **new flexibility** to tailor their improvement plans, and the federal government, which will have the **oversight** to make sure that the plans are sound (Obama, 2015, para. 13).

Obama stated that the federal government had “oversight” with regard to state implemented plans and also indicated that although the states are given “new flexibility,” government approval was mandatory in order to receive federal funds. In his statement above, Obama provided a view of how much power the federal government has over the programs implemented on a state level. Although never specifically mentioned in either speech, this “oversight” also includes the Common Core Standards.

4.3.8 Argumentation

The premise of President Obama’s arguments presented in 2009 was framed within the context of economic stability and public education performance data. The structure of Obama’s arguments in both 2009 and 2015 encompass his ideology for the future of education and the economy. As noted by Fairclough & Fairclough (2012) “ideologies are part of the way in which the dominance of dominant social groups is achieved, maintained, and renewed through particular directions of social change” (p. 100). The economic disaster allowed the President to take drastic action in the wake of economic upheaval. The public supported his measures in the hopes of improving the overall economic condition of the country. These proposed changes may seem to be a natural progression under the extreme circumstances; as Fairclough & Fairclough (2012) point out, “people may not be conscious of the social origins of their beliefs and concerns, individual decisions and actions can be partly explained as resulting from their own intentions but also partly explained as resulting from structural causes” (p. 100). Consequently, the implementation of the Common Core Standards at the very time the nation was experiencing an economic depression along with the election of a new President, created a perfect scenario to enact new and major social policy changes.

As part of President Obama's argumentation strategy from 2009, there were several instances where he presented a negative description of the facts in his speech. Obama depicted a nation in educational disrepair, despite the country's technological advancements and resources. The negative portrayal of the public education system includes statistics on performance compared with other nations. Obama argued:

In 8th grade math, **we've fallen** to 9th place. Singapore's middle-schoolers outperform ours three to one. Just a third of our 13- and 14-year-olds can read as well as they should. And year after year, a **stubborn gap persists** between how well white students are doing compared to their African American and Latino classmates. The relative **decline of American education** is untenable for our economy, **it's unsustainable** for our democracy, **it's unacceptable** for our children -- and **we can't afford to let it continue** (Obama, 2009b, para. 10).

As seen in Chapter 2, these “stubborn gaps” in performance, as Obama calls them, between different non-white ethnic groups compared with White students have consistently existed despite numerous changes to education policy over the decades. In conjunction with his statistics on the nation's global education standing, and using phrases such as, “we’ve fallen,” “decline of American education,” and “it’s unacceptable,” Obama clearly represented the United States education system in the most negative light. Given the economic state at the time, the dismal picture that President Obama depicted of education was very believable.

By connecting the economic disaster with the “decline of American education,” Obama stressed the importance of a college education and requirements for success as a nation. The link to college education and career was made evident numerous times in Obama's speech. This was

a way for him to emphasize the importance of the educational status of the United States. Obama proclaimed:

...**education is** no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it's a **prerequisite for success.**

That's why **workers without a four-year degree** have borne the brunt of recent layoffs, Latinos most of all. That's why, of the 30 fastest growing occupations in America, half **require a Bachelor's degree or more.** By 2016, **four out of every 10 new jobs will require at least some advanced education or training** (Obama, 2009b, para. 7-8).

Again, Obama's argument here is predicated, not on referenced data, but rather on a statistic that is not attributed to any specific study or expert. Because of his position as President, however, audience members may be willing to overlook this lack of supporting evidence. Additionally, in order to appeal to his Hispanic audience, Obama implicated Latinos as "most of all" feeling the effects of the education/economy dilemma.

In his speech from 2015, the focus is less on advocacy for additional reforms, but rather more focus on the success of his newest education policy. The President did advocate for what this policy means in terms of the future of public education; however, this policy comes after Obama has tried other policies for which this was built upon. Obama stressed that there has been much progress in school systems already, but there is still more work to do. He proclaimed:

So there is some real good work that's been done, a foundation to build from. But we're here because we all know that **there's a lot more work to be done.** As wonderful as Antonio's school is, as wonderful as a learning experience is as a lot of our young people are receiving, we know that there are other schools that just aren't hitting the mark yet.

And in today's economy, **a high-quality education is a prerequisite for success** (Obama, 2015, para. 12).

By stating that there was “a lot more work to be done,” Obama argued that there are continued gaps in the learning performance of many students across the nation. Although he complimented the Kenmore Middle School for being a shining example of success in teaching and learning, he claimed that there are numerous schools across the country, given their particular circumstances, which are not performing at a desired level in terms of teaching and learning. Obama did not comment on why these public school performance issues still persisted across the nation; rather he offered a general statement that they do exist and then focused on the positive aspects of school performance overall in light of this new policy. Obama claimed:

And **we want to make sure** that through this piece of legislation, with our **hard work**, with our **focus**, with our **discipline**, with our **passion**, with our **commitment**, that every kid is given the same opportunities that Antonio is getting. I want this not just because it's good for the students themselves, not just because it's good for the communities involved, not only because it's good for our economy, but because it really goes to the **essence of what we are about as Americans** (Obama, 2015, para. 23).

This comment signified that President Obama was still seeking approval and support from his audience and the public on education reform. Again, by using such words as “hard work,” “focus,” “passion,” and “commitment” in emphasizing the “essence of what we are about as Americans,” these statements represent Obama's ideological argumentation for continued social change in education. Obama's intention was to urge his audience to continue the work he started. As Fairclough & Fairclough (2012) have noted regarding this type of discourse, “the ideological

effects of [Obama's] discourse are an aspect of its capacity to have causal effects on social life and that these effects are often intended" (p. 101).

In President Obama's argumentation strategy, he clearly advocated for education reforms and higher standards in our education system overall. His ideological discourse in both speeches gives a view to the arguments framed within the political arena. Unlike Gates, who focused strictly on the higher standards in the form of the Common Core, President Obama was careful not to mention specific programs, unless he himself initiated the policy.

4.3.9 Rhetoric

Components of traditional rhetoric such as contrastive comparison and logical argument, were present in Obama's speeches in order to persuade his audience. These rhetorical appeals highlight "what has been expressed at the semantic, syntactic, and lexical levels of his speech, namely the positive presentation of [Obama and his support for change] and the negative presentation of [the economy and the American public education system]" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 278). Within both speeches, Obama continually used the method of storytelling to introduce comparisons and negative representation of the opposing side of his arguments.

In his 2009 speech, Obama advocates for addressing the most critical challenge of his Presidency, economic stability. This lays the groundwork for his arguments on education reform and linking the health of our economy to high quality education. In the excerpt below, Obama first gave several comparison examples of previous U.S. Presidents who have also faced such societal and economic challenges. Obama stated:

I know there's some who believe we can only handle one challenge at a time. And they forget that **Lincoln** helped lay down the transcontinental railroad and passed the Homestead Act and created the National Academy of Sciences in the midst of civil war.

Likewise, President **Roosevelt** didn't have the luxury of choosing between ending a depression and fighting a war; he had to do both. President **Kennedy** didn't have the luxury of choosing between civil rights and sending us to the moon. And we don't have the luxury of choosing between getting our economy moving now and rebuilding it over the long term (Obama, 2009b, para. 4).

By noting these previous Presidents and their political trials, Obama makes comparisons to these men and tells his audience that the crisis we have before us is not unlike other challenges the United States has faced. Building upon the economic crisis, allowed for a convenient segue into education reform and for Obama to emphasize the synergy that exists between the two. In the statement below Obama attempted to convince the audience that education was the key to our economic “prosperity.” In addressing the global competitiveness of jobs, Obama was drawing on “21st-century” trends in employment strategies. Obama continued:

The source of **America's prosperity** has never been merely how ably we accumulate wealth, but **how well we educate our people**. This has never been more true than it is today. In a **21st-century world** where jobs can be shipped wherever there's an Internet connection, where a child born in Dallas is now competing with a child in New Delhi, where **your best job qualification is not what you do, but what you know...** (Obama, 2009b, para. 7)

Obama talked of “promoting innovation” in schools and mentioned the charter schools as an example of success in that category. He advocated for integrating innovation, not only “where our children learn,” but “when our children learn” as well. In order for this innovation to be more prevalent in the schools, Obama insisted that the calendar year should be longer for students and mentioned a comparison with South Korea. This rhetorical strategy focuses on the comparisons

with other countries and deems American students not prepared for “a 21st-century economy.” He contended:

We can no longer afford an academic calendar designed for when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing the land at the end of each day. That calendar may have once made sense, but today it puts us at a competitive disadvantage. Our children -- listen to this -- **our children spend over a month less in school than children in South Korea** -- every year. That's no way to prepare them for a 21st century economy. **That's why I'm calling for us not only to expand effective after-school programs, but to rethink the school day to incorporate more time** -- whether during the summer or through expanded-day programs for children who need it (Obama, 2009b, para. 31).

In applying these rhetorical elements to his 2015 speech, President Obama primarily compared previous policy shortcomings to current policy and makes reference to the political opposition he faced in his efforts to implement new education reforms. His political rhetoric is evident here when he mentions the struggle to “get a bipartisan effort to fix No Child Left Behind.” This was an attempt to shift the blame for some long awaited changes to the old policy, in suggesting that Congress was not willing to make the changes. Some examples of this rhetoric in Obama’s speech included:

The goals of **No Child Left Behind**, the predecessor of this law, were the right ones: High standards. Accountability. Closing the achievement gap. Making sure that every child was learning, not just some. But in practice, it **often fell short**. It didn’t always consider the specific needs of each community. It led to too much testing during classroom time.

It often forced schools and school districts into cookie-cutter reforms that didn't always produce the kinds of results that we wanted to see (Obama, 2015, para. 3).

Obama also noted that his Administration "tried some different things" when first coming into the Presidential Office and that waivers were given to schools for NCLB. He also mentioned that they were allowing states "more flexibility" for those schools who "were willing to embrace reforms." By mentioning reforms, he is implying reference to the Common Core Standards. Although he does not specifically say those words, it is suggested by the comment he makes about the states helping to create those reforms. Obama stated:

So my Administration, when we came into office, tried some different things. We tried to lead a Race to the Top. That's why we acted to give states that were willing to embrace reforms -- that they helped to formulate -- more flexibility in how to improve student achievement. They were receiving waivers from some of the requirements of No Child Left Behind. But the truth is that could only do so much. And that's why, **for years, I have called on Congress to come together and get a bipartisan effort to fix No Child Left Behind** (Obama, 2015, para. 4).

In the closing of his speech, Obama emphasized how the United States is no longer the symbol for "upward mobility" and compares our status once again with other nations. He touts the Every Student Succeeds Act as the policy that would "get us back out front." This is an example of Obama using his authority and power through rhetoric to proclaim that his policies are more beneficial to the country and will improve the country's standing among other nations around the world. Obama's closing comments:

There was a time I think when upward mobility was the hallmark of America. **We've slipped on that front compared to other countries.** And some of it is because where we

used to be so far ahead of other countries in investing in education for every child, now on some indicators, we've been lagging behind. Hopefully, **this is going to get us back out front** (Obama, 2015, para. 24).

Obama exhibited strong rhetoric in support of his reform ideas and exercises comparison and contrast strategies to persuade his audience. Obama uses his authority and status as President to proclaim that the policies he presents are the best policies for the nation's education system. In his role as President of the United States he often possesses the social, cultural, economic, and political support to make the changes that he proposes. Although Obama alluded to the fact that political support was not always a constant with his decisions about education reform, he continued the reign of this high office bringing with it a formed history of a dominant power structure. As noted here, he is one of a long list of presidential administrations that have enacted numerous education reforms, all advocating their initial policy success and then seeing the previous policy as failure.

4.3.10 Lexical Style

Obama's power and authority as President are evident through his advocacy for education reforms and economic stability. Obama consistently used effective words and methods of persuasion based on statistics, storytelling, and comparisons with other countries. According to van Dijk (1993), the multiple signals of power using a speaker's political and moral position as a way of influencing and persuading his audience are relevant through lexical style (p. 277). In comparing the lexical practice in Obama's speeches, an understanding of the patterns and significance of his word choice and persuasive strategies are evident.

An examination of the specific words (nouns, pronouns, and adjectives) used in both speeches, reveal the lexical changes from his language usage in 2009 to his language usage in

2015. One of the differences here is that the speech from 2009 is over five thousand (5,138) words long and the speech from 2015 is just under two thousand (1,922) words in length. However, despite this overall word count difference, there are some telling similarities. A table of the most commonly used words from these speeches is indicated below:

Key Words	2009	2015	Key Words	2009	2015
Achieve/Achievement	6	5	If	12	2
America/American/America's	50	4	Innovation	5	0
Believe	3	1	Nation/National	16	4
Career	7	1	Need	26	4
Change	5	0	Parent(s)	11	1
College	21	3	Reform	9	6
Dream	8	0	School	59	16
Education	31	10	Standard (s)	14	4
Equal/Equality	1	0	Student (s)	30	16
Great/Greater	5	7	Teach/Teacher/Teaching	38	8
High/Higher/Highest	19	9	We/We've/We're	98	45
I/I'm/I'd/I'll	46	21	You/Your/You're/You've	63	4

Figure 4.1: Lexical Analysis – Key Word Frequency in President Obama's Speeches

The frequency with which Obama uses the word “standard(s)” decreased nearly four times less from his speech in 2009 (14 instances) to his speech in 2015 (4 instances). However, proportionately, given the varied length of both speeches the occurrence of this word is relatively consistent in both speeches. In 2015, Obama did not mention the word “standards” nearly as much, because he was focused on praising the passing of a new education reform policy at the time. In both speeches we see a high concentration of the words “school” (59 instances in 2009 and 16 instances in 2015) and “student(s)” (30 instances in 2009 and 16 instances in 2015). In addition, Obama mentions the word “career” only seven times in 2009, but then only mentions it one time in 2015. This is because his discourse primarily focused on education reform policies and his perception of their benefit to the economy.

As similar to the Bill Gates speeches, President Obama emphasizes using such pronouns as “we” and “I” most frequently in both speeches; however, relative to the number of words in each speech the frequency of these words is comparable. In the 2009 speech there were 98 instances of the word “we” compared to his speech in 2015 where there were 45 instances of the

word. Obama also mentions the word “you” with heavy frequency in his 2009 speech (68 instances). There are many similarities in discourse between Gates’ speech from 2008 and Obama’s speech from 2009. The exigence was clear that they were both trying to persuade their audience of new education reform policies. Analyzing the frequency of Obama’s words overall, shows that in 2009, he was focused on “America,” “teach/teacher,” “education,” and “college” when talking about the American “Dream” and our obligation to the founding principles of our “nation.” Obama’s word choice was particularly varied in his 2009 speech, where he used these words to persuade his audience with statements on how “America” is not living up to its potential with regard to education. He placed much importance on how the “nation” was no longer as competitive with other countries.

Contrary to his 2009 speech, Obama’s primary focus in 2015 was on “students” and “school” based on his advocacy and support of his newly implemented policy at the time. More emphasis was placed on “education” in terms of what “we” need to do as a nation to continue improving our public education system. Obama’s tone in 2015 seemed to be more subdued because of his named successes in education reform through his Presidency. Compared with his speech from 2009, it was evident that Obama argued less for topics such as the American Dream, higher standards, and competitiveness in a global economy. Rather, he expressed a great deal of satisfaction in the Every Student Succeeds Act with respect to it being passed through a bipartisan political effort. This is why he was more focused on the accomplishments of his administration and the new policy itself.

In the speech from 2009, it is evident that Obama was on a mission to convince his audience of the importance of education in our nation’s long-term economic stability. By using words such as “America” and “education,” Obama was trying to convince his audience of their obligation as

United States citizens to demand the best out of the education system and expect the country's children to be among the most educated in the world. He also painted a picture of how "America" is lagging behind other countries because of inferior "education" strategies.

Although Obama mentions "higher standards" frequently in both speeches, the President does not center on these words for fear of the public making a connection to the Common Core and an assumption of federal government involvement. Despite the fact that this is how he refers to Common Core, he prefers to speak in more general terms about raising the nation's education standards. The statistics he provides, along with human interest stories such as his reference to a student named Yvonne from California in his 2009 speech, which are related to education has been a consistent part of Obama's rhetoric on education reform. The excitement and urgency of Obama's speech from 2009 is evident by the length and breathe of the content. His resolve to bring more stability into the economy provided a perfect segue into his advocacy for change in our education system.

These two speeches delivered by Obama represent his power and authority in the wake of a financial disaster and a nationwide education debate on reform policy. As with Gates, Obama declared education to be the great equalizer in the classroom, no matter what "your zip code." The difference between Gates and Obama on this point is that Obama does allude to challenges that students from varying demographics may face while trying to get an education. The content and context for which these speeches were given allows the viewing of President Obama's language with a critical lens, while exposing his social, cultural, and political status. The influence that surrounds Obama and the Office of the President through his speeches, is a recognized force that is part of the changing landscape of public education.

4.4 The Obama Administration's Support and Investment in Education Reform

This section examines the Obama Administration's advocacy for education reform through the lens of financial support. As more federal monies have been infused into public education, an examination of how that support has changed over time and what the Obama Administration's contribution has been through his Presidency is highlighted. In addition, a closer look at what is being done about socio-economic disparities in classrooms is underscored as well.

4.4.1 How does the federal government affect American education policy?

President Obama's discourse offers a lens in exploring the role of the federal government in United States education policy. In a discursive sense, through these two speeches and many others given during his two terms, it is evident that the President of the United States holds remarkable cultural and political capital. Additionally, the President has traditionally influenced leaders of other countries, CEO's of corporations, and of course, other politicians. The President's speeches are essentially an affirmation of his power and authority, but also public recognition of the nation's hegemonic structure. As an example of this, the White House website provides a clear statement on President Obama's position with regard to education:

If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible — from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career (The White House, 2016d).

As we have seen in Chapter 2, the support for education reform has been consistent with every Presidential Administration since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was put in place in 1965. Thus, it is not unusual for the President to propose education reforms while occupying the Oval Office. States have come to rely on the support of the federal government in ensuring the quality of education is being held to certain standards. The assessment testing of students, which began in 1971, was a method to view progress and measurement of success in school systems

across the nation. This testing has grown from being administered in fourth grade, eighth grade, and twelfth grade to being administered every year beginning in the third grade. These testing assessments are clear examples of how the federal government affects education policy and continues to influence the curriculum in the classroom by supporting such initiatives as the Common Core Standards. In addition, incentivizing programs in order for school districts to acquire segments of federal funding (i.e., No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Every Student Succeeds Act) has been a consistent practice in federal education policy.

4.4.2 What is the federal government's financial investment in education reform?

Since the signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, more money has been infused into the public education system with each passing Presidential Administration. What began as an initiative for low-income students and financially strapped school districts has now become a focus for standardized testing and assessments through the Bush and Obama reform policies. In the original ESEA bill of 1965, President Johnson's Administration proposed financial assistance to those schools and school districts most in need with the goal of alleviating the challenges students faced as a result of their low-income status. The latest reform policy by the Obama Administration has made an effort to reinitialize those original ideas through the Every Student Succeeds Act, in addition to supporting the testing and assessment effort which has culminated into what we know as the Common Core Standards.

A study of the financial support of the federal government with regard to education, indicates a substantial increase over the decades. Beginning with the ESEA policy in 1965, funding for Elementary and Secondary Education was less than one billion dollars and now total funding for K-12 public education has reached an unprecedented \$75 billion as of fiscal year 2011 reports (Cornman, Keaton, and Glander, 2013). When looking at spending over time, beginning

in 1966 for elementary and secondary education, there is a noticeable trend upward. The figure below illustrates spending specifically under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act through the year 2006 by the federal government. With each Presidential Administration, the funding initiative of public school education became greater and greater. The figure depicts spending amounts that jumped considerably due to the implementation of the No Child Left Behind policy of the Bush Administration, which ended up spending over \$25 billion through this program.

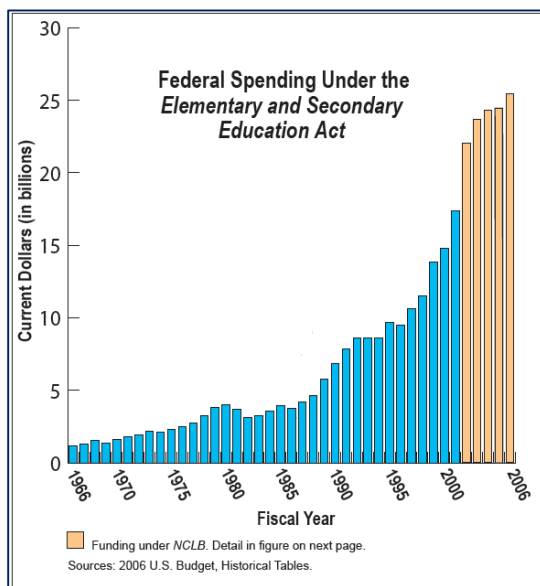


Figure 4.2: Federal Spending under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: 1966 to 2006

Source: U.S. Department of Education (2005)

In studying the funding allocation based on state, local, federal, and other sources, we find that most financial support comes from the state and local levels. Based on historical data provided by the U.S. Department of Education, the overall funding for K-12 public education has risen from approximately \$248 billion in 1990 to \$536 billion in 2006. This is an increase of \$288 billion – more than double the amount - within a short span of 16 years. The figure below illustrates the gradual increase of funding from all sectors that support public education, with roughly 75 percent derived from state and local funding sources and 25 percent from federal and private (other) funding.

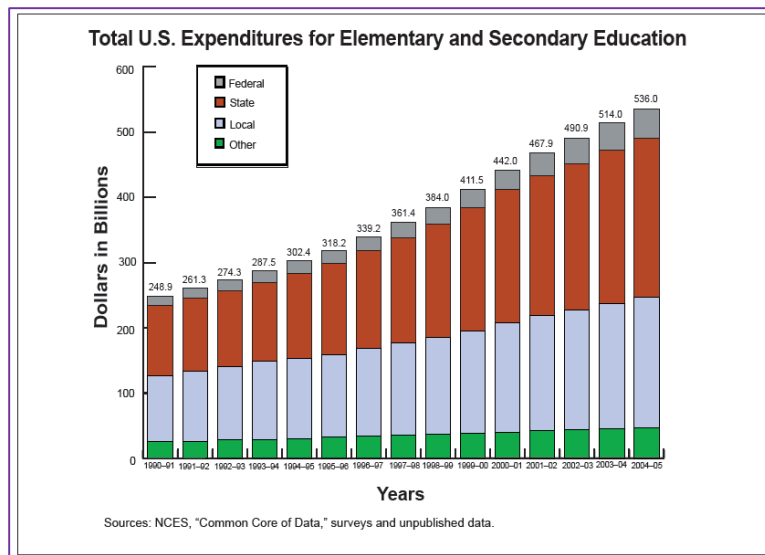


Figure 4.3: Total U.S. Expenditures for Elementary and Secondary Education from 1990 to 2006
Source: U.S. Department of Education (2005)

In addition, the review of funding for the fiscal year 2011 shows the elementary and secondary education allocation for combined state, local, and federal funding is a total of \$607 billion (Cornman, Keaton, and Glander, 2013). The figure below illustrates the percentage allocation between all three funding sources, with the majority of funding coming from state and local sources. Between 2010 and 2011, the federal government contributed roughly 12-13%, which amounts to approximately \$73 billion to \$79 billion during that period (Cornman, Keaton, and Glander, 2013).

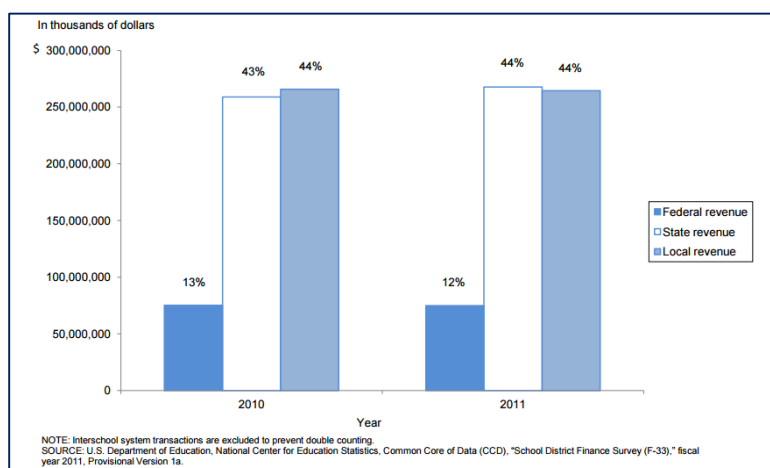


Figure 4.4: Total Percentage of U.S. Funding Allocation for Elementary and Secondary Education in the Years 2010 and 2011
Source: Cornman, Keaton, and Glander, 2013

As illustrated by the data above, the federal funding allocation for elementary and secondary education has increased dramatically since the first initialization of the ESEA policy in 1965. The Obama Administration has surpassed any other Presidential Administration in terms of education spending overall. In President Obama's 2015 budget proposal for education, he outlined what amounted to be a \$69 billion appropriation of funds; in his most recent budgetary request for education, an amount of \$70.7 billion was requested for 2016 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Although the funding allocations have been steadily above the \$60 billion mark since the Obama Administration took office, there has been little progress with regard to successes and improvement in education overall. One segment of education where there is little improvement, and for which the United States has long been struggling, is the socioeconomic inequities that exist across the nation's school systems.

4.4.3 What is the Obama Administration doing about socioeconomic inequalities?

It is evident that there has been a trail of policies from the federal government that advocate funding for marginalized segments of students and school districts. Consistently, the course of action for the federal government has been to allocate funding towards poorer school districts across the country, which was first guaranteed under the Johnson Administration in 1965. Although President Obama does mention the word "unequal" in his 2009 speech in reference to the famous legal case of Brown vs. Board of Education. In his 2015 speech, the word "equal" is not mentioned in any form. In contrast, the U.S. Department of Education website exhibits extensive advocacy for equality in education regardless of socioeconomic status.

In broaching the subject of "Equity of Opportunity" from the U.S. Department of Education, a quote from President Obama is clearly displayed on their website with the words: "We are true to our creed when a little girl born into the bleakest poverty knows that she has the

same chance to succeed as anybody else” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Similar to Gates’ discourse, the discourse of the Obama Administration on this issue is for these historically marginalized children to get an education. The Department of Education website states:

America is not yet the country it strives to be—a place where all who are willing to work hard can get ahead, join a thriving middle class, and lead fulfilling lives. Our country derives much of its strength from its core value as a land of opportunity. But, today, economic mobility is actually greater in a number of other countries. Despite this challenge, **we know how to work toward the solution: access to a world-class education can help** to ensure that all children in this country with dreams and determination can reach their potential and succeed (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

This is an ideal that has been mentioned by both Gates and Obama in terms of opportunity to a high quality education is the great equalizer. The continued discourse praising high standards and rigorous curriculum overlooks the core issues behind low student success rate in the classroom. The federal government has traditionally addressed low performance as related to student economic status. As such, lack of equitable state and local funding is being blamed for short-changing poverty stricken schools across the nation. As stated on the U.S. Department of Education website (2016):

The challenge of ensuring educational equity is formidable. Our country's international competitors are improving faster than we are educationally, and many are having greater success in closing achievement gaps—which remain stubbornly wide in the United States. Structural barriers, including **inequitable funding systems**, impede our progress. While one might expect schools in low-income communities to receive extra resources, the reverse is often true; a Department of Education study found that **45 percent of high-**

poverty schools received less state and local funding than was typical for other schools in their district (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

In light of these low-income area school districts not getting enough money, the Department of Education insists the Obama Administration is “supporting states in their efforts to ensure quality teaching in every classroom; raise standards for all students; build systems to improve instruction; and significantly improve low-performing schools” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). As evidenced by the student performance outcomes cited in Chapter 2, there has been very little progress in ameliorating the success of minority students from economically deprived districts around the country.

The consistent theme from the Obama Administration on education reform comes down to monetary contribution and higher standards in aiding low performing students. However, again, the issues that underscore these low performances are many and they do not always relate to monetary issues or lack of higher standards (i.e., Common Core). Besides learning disabilities, some of these issues may include various forms of abuse, single-family homes, drug use, alcoholism, and numerous other family dysfunctions that inhibit a child from learning in the classroom, despite the quality of education received. Although the economic constraints families face are a contributing factor, there are numerous social issues that are not being addressed in the rhetoric of politicians and philanthropists alike with regard to education reform.

4.5 Theoretical Implications of President Obama’s Discourse

In examining President Obama’s discourse on education reform, it is evident that he wields considerable power and cultural capital. Obama has demonstrated his ability to invoke economic, social, and political change in the wake of a national economic disaster. As President of the United States, Barack Obama is immediately recognized as a powerful figure who, with the majority

consent of those in the legislature, is able to implement societal changes that affect, not only the United States, but other nations as well. In evaluating the discourse of Obama's education reform speeches, we are able to view this hegemonic process at work through the lens of critical discourse analysis.

According to Gramsci (1971), education is an integral part of the hegemonic structures within society; whereby, "every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship" (p. 350). Gramsci also contends that hegemony "occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations" (p. 350). These conceptions of hegemony provide a correlation to the consistent rhetoric of both Gates and Obama in terms of their "neoliberal" approach to education. The drive to compete with other nations, along with the standardization of curriculum, indicates a neoliberal slant to education reform based on a capitalistic economic system.

Additionally, language used by Gates and Obama was the instrument by which mass consent was propagated in order to implement these latest reforms on a nation-wide scale. Through studying President Obama's role in this reform, his rhetoric emphasizes competition with other nations and "challenge" states to adopt "world-class" standards in their curriculum. As Gramsci noted in his evaluation of language and hegemony, he views this relationship "as intricately connected to how we think and make sense of the world...it is central to both politics and hegemony" (Ives, 2004, p. 72). As evidenced through the many attempts at education reform, hegemony is the driving force behind any changes that occur on a social level.

The generalization of students in Obama's speeches is apparent when he speaks of education being the way out of poverty. Again, as with Bill Gates, a presumption is that all

students need is a higher set of standards that is consistent across all schools. Historically, the level of linguistic and cultural capital plays a significant role in the pedagogical communication process of learning (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2015). Evidence of unequal learning practices of students in the university is less obvious than in the secondary education school system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2015). There is a “direct correlation between academic performance and social-class background...in secondary school it manifests itself in the most scholastic results (p. 76). In examining the level of proficiency in student performance, Bourdieu (2015) contends there is a natural inequality among the sexes due to their gendered “situation.” The trend for subject interest and study varies between male and female students; in fact, “female students are twice as likely as male students to enroll in Arts courses” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2015, p. 76). They contend that this is due primarily from the socially constructed historical definition of male and female roles in society. This contention by Bourdieu and Passeron (2015), provides another aspect of “education being the only path to equality.” Historically, the social constructs of our society have created an imbalance with regard to equality in the classroom, in society, and the workplace, if not based on intelligence alone, but also based on gender.

Evident in Obama’s speeches is the advocacy for equal education standards; however, the reality of each classroom, each school district, and each state can produce varying results based on individual student social-class and cultural capital. The federal government has been disseminating reports on the disparities in student education since performance testing was administered and reported during the Reagan Administration. The belief that public schools in the United States are on a continual course of failure is representative of the symbolic power of words through legitimacy. As Bourdieu (1991) notes “what creates power of words and slogans...is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them” (p. 170). As President of the United

States, Obama upholds a long legacy of believability by his elected public and as a result, “those who exercise power and those who submit to it” are responsible for its reproduction (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 170). Consequently, Bourdieu is saying that the reproduction of power through the use of language must be affirmed by an audience in order for that power to be maintained and for our social constructions to change.

The power/consent dynamic in the use of language is indicative of a political and governmental structure that thrives on a reciprocal relationship with its public. The approval and affirmation of words (Obama’s discourse on education reform) and action (the implementation of education reform policy) are representative of a society that believes in those words; however, “words alone cannot create this belief” (Bourdieu, 1991, p 170). Prior to the Obama Administration, the political rhetoric has represented the belief that the United States education system was constantly in peril and Obama facilitated changes in policy based on those beliefs through his social, economic, and cultural status as President.

4.6 Conclusion

Power, authority, and dominance are evident in President Obama’s speeches along with the political actions predicated upon those speeches. The dominance of his discourse has made a substantial impact on the structure of our public school system. In this examination, evidence presented suggests Obama’s discourse is not only a product of hegemonic power structures, but is also a conduit of those power structures. Although his speeches contain remnants of support for marginalized students, the essence of his rhetoric maintains a focus on standardized curriculum and global competitiveness in education.

The quest for higher standards in education is a consistent mantra in the discourse of both Gates and Obama. This mission was reached with the implementation of the Common Core

Standards; however, the implication of this policy will not be fully realized for years to come. This neoliberal approach to education has been influenced by privatization and competitive global initiatives which have been the driving force in the creation of these curriculum standards. In the process, this has culminated a disregard for student socioeconomic circumstances and the influence of these conditions which may inhibit the learning process in the classroom. Although the Obama Administration has made efforts to support challenges resulting from low-income disparities, other social issues surrounding the individual student and their learning abilities are not recognized as a factor in the teaching/learning dynamic. By ignoring the underlying issues surrounding low student performance rates, there is no proven indication that standardized curriculum will improve this performance. As a government, and as a consenting public, we have chosen to comply with and legitimize the hegemonic structure that drives both our economy and our education system. Consequently, the marginalization of segments of student populations still exists when applying a consistent set of standards by which to evaluate all students.

The political strategies of Obama in terms of what he has said in his speeches and what he does not say are equally important when conducting an analysis of his discourse. Research has unveiled his aversion to explicit mention of the words “Common Core” in his speeches; rather he chooses to address the Common Core in general terms as not to link their creation with government support. This distinction is rhetorically advantageous to the political mission of distancing the government from the Common Core Standards. However, at the same time, the President enacted the Race to the Top program, which strictly stipulates an incentive for receiving federal funds is to have in place a plan for “Common set of K-12 standards.” The timing of these policies is no coincidence. The power and authority of both Gates and President Obama have clearly defined the immediate future of public school education. The speeches made by Gates and Obama are

complimentary to one another in both 2008 and 2009 respectively. The rhetorical tactics used are very similar in terms of storytelling, comparisons, and data collection.

In assessing the future of public education reform, we see many voices in opposition to the current standardized curriculum. Reports on the Common Core guidelines as being too rigorous and the testing more difficult than the actual curriculum, have gained much attention in the media for the lack of a more holistic education. The remainder of this research will focus on the dissenters of this policy, including discourse from those who are against both privatization of education and government interference. The next chapter will also evaluate where the future of United States public education is headed in light of continuous hegemonic reproduction of government policies produced by power and language.

Chapter 5: Dissenting Discourse on Education Reform Policy and the Future of American Education Reform

The previous two chapters have analyzed the rhetoric of both Bill Gates and President Obama on the subject of education reform. The connection between language and power in the form of rhetoric affects both the public education system and society as a whole. This analysis of the discourse surrounding education reform policy has unveiled the continued hegemonic structures of government in conjunction with those individuals who possess enormous cultural and economic capital, such as Bill Gates. The research study conducted here reveals a reciprocal relationship between the United States government and its public; whereby, the actions of those with the most political and economic capital are validated through implementation of social policy – in this case, education reform.

Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy of the early 2000s, the battle against consequential assessments and standardized curriculum has been waging heavily. The NCLB policy brought about heavy assessment testing and evaluations of teachers, schools, and administrators in return for consistent and substantial federal funding. This prompted public schools to advocate for fewer assessments for students and teachers. As a result of this growing discord, the Obama Administration advocated for the standardized curriculum movement (through the Race to the Top initiative), which was already taking shape across the country through the efforts of state legislative bodies and private sector billionaires. Thus, the Common Core Standards was born in the latter half of 2009. Since the inception of the NCLB policy and subsequent Common Core Standards, publicity for dissenting voices of high-stakes testing and government intervention in education policy has been persistent in the media. As more outcomes from education policy were made available to the public, the dissension continued to grow among education experts, educators, administrators, and parents.

This chapter examines the discourse of those in opposition to the latest education policy known as the Common Core Standards. First, a discussion will be conducted on dissenting comments related to education reform efforts beginning with NCLB through the current reform policy of Common Core Standards. As part of this discussion, remarks delivered by Diane Ravitch, a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, to the Modern Language Association on January 11, 2014 will be highlighted. Selections from this speech, along with excerpts from her interviews on education and rhetoric from other opponents of the current policy will be considered. Second, the chapter will explore why non-Common Core states chose not to implement this standardized curriculum and what they are doing in its place. Third, the chapter will consider whether the Common Core is actually producing college-ready students. Lastly, this study will examine what the future holds for United States education reform policy: Is the future of United States public education in the hands of privatization? Or will the federal government continue to play more of a role in education policy and curriculum? In order to examine these topics, the discord on education reform must be understood, beginning with the NCLB policy of 2002.

5.1 The Rise of Dissension for Education Reform

While criticisms of public school education have been a constant throughout its history, the report on a Nation at Risk in the 1980s was the catalyst that sparked the call for standardized, rigorous curriculum and assessments. The enactment of education reform using methods of standardized curriculum has been a goal of the Oval Office since the Reagan Administration. Although the Reagan Administration did not succeed in implementing a plan for education reform during the 1980s, the Bush Administration was the first to implement such a policy of accountability and assessments in exchange for federal funding through the policy known as No Child Left Behind. However, it was not until the Obama Administration, along with support from

powerful advocates, such as Bill Gates, that this agenda was able to become a reality in the form of Common Core Standards. The opposing discourse on education reform does not just take issue with the policies themselves, but also with how the execution of such policies came to fruition. In studying the main characteristics of dissension, high-stakes testing has been publicized as being at the heart of this conflict. In addition, socioeconomic disparity, teacher education and the profession, along with questioning the motives for reform with regard to privatization and government involvement are some of the more contentious subjects surrounding the latest education reforms.

5.1.1 High-Stakes Testing

One of the key components to federally supported education reform policies has been the application of high-stakes testing in the public school systems. What does high-stakes testing mean? It means that the results formulated from schools and school districts have significant penalties associated with them, which may come in the form of monetary sanctions and/or school restructuring (Barth and Mitchell, 2006). With the advent of the NCLB policy, schools were being monitored in “meeting academic proficiency through Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) calculations ... targets defined by state education agencies that must be met by schools and school districts to avoid sanctions of increasing severity” (Springer, 2008, p. 556). The planned objective of this policy was to ensure that all students in all schools across the nation would be academically proficient in grade-level reading and math by the year 2014 (Springer, 2008, p. 557). As of 2006, all states, with the exception of Iowa, had developed benchmarks for its students in order to accommodate the requirements set forth by the NCLB policy (Barth and Mitchell, 2006).

Studying the effects of education reform, beginning with the No Child Left Behind policy, shows that there is a discontent for high-stakes testing in the public schools and its negative

consequences for students. Some of the major drawbacks voiced by opposition leaders of such reform point to four key negative classroom effects, which include (Barth and Mitchell, 2006):

- Narrowing the curriculum by excluding from it subject matter not tested.
- Eliminating topics either not tested or not likely to appear on the test even within tested subjects.
- Reducing learning to the memorization of facts easily recalled for multiple-choice testing at the expense of in-depth learning and critical thinking.
- Devoting too much classroom time to test preparation rather than learning.

These aforementioned drawbacks of the NCLB policy ignited a discourse that espoused the education of United States students and schooling as “a production-oriented process where outcome is measured by student employability, school-wide report cards, and state benchmarks” (Courville, 2003, p. 49). This provided the federal government, along with state and local governments and corporate stakeholders, the opportunity to “berate public education for its lack of production outcomes” (Courville, 2003, p. 49). No Child Left Behind became the catalyst for political discourse of education policy with the use of such words as “standards” and “measurement” in the framing of education failure “as a result of inadequate teachers, parents, and students” (Courville, 2006, p. 50). In doing so, schools were left accountable for teaching and learning environments that were traditionally underperforming and located in poor school districts. This led to conversations on the necessity of broadening the scope of NCLB to “address the real needs of poor children and struggling schools” (Noguera, 2007, p. 19).

The position of the Common Core Standards is that with the same standardized curriculum in all schools across the nation, all children will have an equal opportunity for both education and career. Contrary to this belief, the voices of opposition to the Common Core see a different outcome. The Common Core Standards were created without the expertise of education experts, especially the standards developed for early K-3 grades. In fact “more than 500 early childhood educators signed a joint statement complaining that the standards were developmentally

inappropriate for children in the early grades” (Ravitch, 2014a). The argument behind this statement is that the standards “emphasize academic skills and leave inadequate time for imaginative play,” while “proponents of the Common Core insist that children as young as 5, 6, or 7 should be on track to be college-and-career ready” (Ravitch, 2014a). The contention is that children this young are not likely to be seriously thinking about college or career. The expectation that young school age children are to be groomed for a future, for which they have little understanding, is an unreasonable prospect.

The discourse surrounding the subject of high-stakes testing noted a blindness to the realities of the classroom. Although the consequences tied to the Common Core Standards are distinctive from the NCLB policy, the repercussions of administering a rigorous testing environment beginning in kindergarten has its own set of unrealistic expectations. This dissension is in the argument that there will continue to be deviations in learning among all students and “no matter how high and uniform their standards, there are variations in academic achievement within states, there are variations within districts, there are variations within every school” (Ravitch, 2014a). The conclusion is that although the same curriculum is being taught to all children within a given grade level, there will always be variations in student learning and understanding regardless of the standards.

Another argument against high stakes testing focus on how these tests “create unhealthy environments for teaching and learning in many classrooms” (Dutro and Selland, 2012, p. 341). In a study conducted in 2000 of students drawing themselves taking high stakes tests, they were depicted as being “anxious, upset, bored, or cynical about testing” (Dutro and Selland, p. 346). The study concluded that while “some students maybe respond to the high- stakes of the test with increased motivation, others, often older, urban students, may simply give up, seeing the tests as

sources of intimidation and humiliation” (Dutro and Selland, p. 346). In another study conducted of 33 third graders in an urban elementary school, the children expressed their understanding of high-stakes testing and consequently, the value placed on testing results in relation to how they construct their identities (Dutro and Selland, 2012, p. 342). The student view of whether they are proficient or not proficient in a subject area has great effect on their sense of worth and value at an early age. Students expressed understanding of these tests “as being used to judge their own learning and performance” with regard to grade progression and retention (Dutro and Selland, p. 353).

In addition to their own school experiences, these students expressed an understanding of how these tests weigh heavily for both their schools and teachers (Dutro and Selland, p. 353). The student understanding of consequences relating to the schools were also evident in the study, where one student stated that “the scores will tell them if our school is teaching us good” (Dutro and Selland, p. 355). This study shows that students are conditioned to comprehend the significance of high-stakes testing, not only for their personal achievement in the classroom, but also as a success measure for the schools themselves.

5.1.2 Effects on Teacher Education and the Profession

The wide reaching effects of education reform do not only include students, administrators, and parents; teachers have been scrutinized considerably in the wake of constant change in education policy. The NCLB policy propagated considerable criticism against teachers and their abilities in the classroom. The policy required teachers to be highly qualified and possess “state certification and demonstrable proficiency in both pedagogy and subject area” (Casallas and Shelly, p. 262). Most people agreed that teachers should be measured by a set of appropriate qualifications with regard to their teaching abilities; however, teachers were being judged by the

performance of their students, which raised into question the competency of many long-standing teachers. The standardized curriculum and assessments have become recognized as an assault on teacher quality and the profession as a whole. In her continued arguments about the state of the United States education system, Ravitch (2011b) comments on the Common Core Standards (referred to as Gates' policy) and the previous national No Child Left Behind policy with regard to teacher quality:

So far, the main effect of Gates' policy has been to **demoralize millions of teachers**, who don't understand how they went from being respected members of the community to Public Enemy No. 1. As a nation we now have a **toxic combination of a failed federal policy** — No Child Left Behind — which made testing the be-all and end-all of schooling, and Bill Gates' misguided belief that teacher quality can be determined by student test scores. Examining rhetoric that speaks of marginalizing teachers, discourse reveals there is an assumption of what quality teaching looks like. Bill Gates had mentioned this in his speech from 2008; however, the contention is that quality teaching may be defined differently depending on who is asked. As such, the experience and the quality of education depends on many factors, but "learning has been defined as a rise in a standardized test score and teaching as the set of activities that leads to that score, with the curriculum tightly linked to the tests" (Rose, 2015). The irony is that "teachers can prep students for a standardized test, get a bump in scores, and yet not be providing a very good education" (Rose, 2015).

The history of teaching in the United States tells a different story about how society has changed. Teachers and schools have had to contend with increasing and varied social problems. Schools of the 1950s were more tranquil than they are today and teachers were considered the authority in the classroom and often went unchallenged in their pedagogical practices (Ravitch,

2011a). Teachers were not subject to mandates by political leaders and schools were left to their own devices in terms of education policy. As a result of the changing landscape of public education, Ravitch (2011a) states:

Teachers have one of the most difficult jobs in society...classes include children who are recent immigrants, many of whom don't speak English; they include children who have social, emotional, mental, and physical disabilities; they include children who live in desperate poverty.

The implementation of NCLB marginalized teachers by requiring them to do more in the classroom, so that testing scores would improve. Rather than sending money to those schools with the most need, the NCLB and the Race to the Top program incentivized education and demanded higher student proficiency. Although educators knew that 100 percent student proficiency by 2014 was an unattainable goal, punishment for schools in the form of closings and personnel changes became imminent nonetheless. The primary factor in whether a student succeeds in the classroom, is not whether the student has a good or bad teacher, it is the socioeconomic condition of that student that drives their success and motivation. Ravitch (2011a) contends:

What the federal efforts of the past decade or more ignore is that the root cause of low academic achievement is poverty, not "bad" teachers. Children who are homeless, in ill health, or living in squalid quarters are more likely to miss school and less likely to have home support for their schoolwork. The most important education in children's lives are their families.

Additionally, the ability for teachers to apply their own pedagogical practices in effectively teaching students is inhibited by the testing initiative. The curriculum, in turn, results in a more prescriptive lesson that teaches to the tests. Although advocates such as Bill Gates proclaim that

“standards are not dictating how to teach students, but rather what to teach them,” those who oppose a standardized curriculum strongly disagree. The argument is that by having a prescribed curriculum, the method of teaching subject matter will have little variance. With this, also comes the argument for standards, but with more flexibility for the teacher. As Ravitch (2014a) contends:

It is good to have standards, I believe in standards, but they must not be rigid, inflexible, and prescriptive. Teachers must have the flexibility to tailor standards to meet the needs of students in their classrooms, the students who can’t read English, the students who are two grade levels behind, the students who are homeless, the students who just don’t get it and just don’t care, the students who frequently miss class. Standards alone cannot produce a miraculous transformation.

5.1.3 Socioeconomic Disparity

Although advocates for the NCLB and Common Core Standards have attempted to address marginalized schools and school districts, these policies have been accused of not responding to needs of the students outside of their academic studies. The socioeconomic issues surrounding a child’s inability to learn in the classroom requires a more adequate solution than imposed higher standards and measurement. The argument for this is that “if we want to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn, we must ensure that their basic needs are being met” (Noguera, 2007, p. 19). In addition, responding to these needs would include “expanding access to healthcare, pre-school and affordable housing, and providing more generous parental leave policies should be included on the education reform agenda” (Noguera, 2007, p. 19). It has been advocated that schools were not just failing due to economic status, but rather because of underlying social issues that affect a students’ ability to perform at a high level in the classroom. SerVaas (2011) contends:

Many of our schools are failing for reasons that have little to do with education and a lot to do with larger socioeconomic issues such as high concentrations of poverty, unemployment, gangs, drugs, violence, and, in many families, the belief that education will not make a difference. We need to fight these conditions and change those beliefs (para. 5).

As evidenced through the policies enacted by both the state and federal governments with regard to education reform, the primary focus has continued to be higher standards, increased measurements, and school accountability. The education reform effort is touted as being misguided in terms of fundamental issues contributing to underperforming schools and students. The resolution or improvement of traditionally marginalized student populations lies within the ability for the United States to address these issues, because “if we are to get serious about education reform for the twenty-first century, we must talk about community development” (Cobb, 2007). In order for students to actually learn in the classroom, “students must enter school ready to take advantage of teaching and learning” (Cobb, 2007). If the nation does not address these “issues of poverty and race in which access to quality education is embedded, we are in danger of coming apart at the seams” (Cobb, 2007).

In an effort to ameliorate the denigration of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, education reform policies such as NCLB have, in some cases, been accused of marginalizing higher performing students. The NCLB policy was set up to sanction those schools whose performance level was not proficient given the new standards set by the state and local administrators. Consequently, some schools with historically consistent underachievement were penalized instead of provided with the tools to improve their academic standing. In other cases, selective instruction was given based on adequately meeting achievement requirements, where

attention was diverted from higher achieving students. According to Krieg (2011), “NCLB creates incentives for school administrators to focus resources on specific subgroups of students...each school must test five distinct racial groups and three categories of students: Black, Hispanic, White, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, low-income, bilingual, and special education” (p. 654). This policy essentially encouraged the use of strategic instruction in order to meet the requirements set forth by the school districts in accordance with NCLB policy. Research conducted in the state of Washington shows that the use of “strategic instruction based upon a student’s expected ability to influence a school’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)” was determined in student-level data (Krieg, 2011, p. 655). The implication is that the NCLB policy was also “reducing the performance of children in successful groups by shifting the resources of successful student groups to those in less-successful groups” (Krieg, 2011, p. 664). Most often, the implementation of such sanction driven policy based on student outcomes has proven that schools will do whatever it takes to meet the requirements in order not to face harsh consequences.

Although a history of ethnic disparity has been present since the U.S. Department of Education began compiling student performance data in 1971, there has been little or no change in this gap with the implementation of the latest reforms. For example, the education outcomes of Latino students consistently fall short of their white counterparts in the classroom with regard to overall achievement ratings. As noted by Casellas and Shelly (2012), “Latino fourth graders have scored an average of 18 points below white students on the reading test and between 21 and 34 points below white students on the math test” (p. 260). Major factors that contribute to this disparity are derived from student socioeconomic status, along with limited English language fluency (Casellas and Shelly, p. 261). Thus, the children are not able to understand their teachers as quickly as other students who are native English speakers. In addition, parents are also left with

an inability to “navigate the extensive bureaucracy of the American education system” (Casellas and Shelly, p. 261). Learning and teaching issues associated with numerous socioeconomic and language barriers in the classroom are also exacerbated by financial constraints within school districts.

The economic recession of 2008 was one such instance when school districts across the nation were experiencing major financial constraints and as a result, those students who were already marginalized, became more disadvantaged during this crisis. As with many organizations during the time, this meant the layoff of elementary and secondary education teachers across the country. In addition to layoffs, teachers were subject to “furloughs, salary freezes, benefit reductions, facility closings, and the reduction or elimination of a wide range of academic and extracurricular activities” (Young and Fusarelli, 2011, p. 211). As a result of this fiscal measure, disadvantaged students became more so in the classroom “with fewer teachers, classes are larger, which can have a negative effect on student achievement in later grades – especially for disadvantaged students” (Young and Fusarelli, 2011, p. 211). As a result of this depletion of teachers, “the number of disadvantaged children in the United States is increasing and severity of their conditions has grown during the recession” (Young and Fusarelli, 2011, p. 212).

Although the financial crisis had reached a peak during 2009, the Obama Administration’s American Recovery & Reinvestment Act provided “approximately \$100 billion for education” in an effort to alleviate its effects on schools (Young and Fusarelli, 2011, p. 212). As previously noted, this stimulus package also contained the Race to the Top initiative that mandated the implementation of common standards across all states in order to receive additional federal funding. The financial status of school districts during this national economic crisis allowed states to be vulnerable in yielding to proposed reform policies in an effort to sustain their existence in

unsettled times. Despite these reforms and financial support, the recession increased the “number of disadvantaged children in the United States” with the “number of children living in poverty climbing to 15.6 million in 2010, an increase of more than 20% in four years and the highest rate in 20 years” (Young and Fusarelli, p. 212). The recession of 2008-2009 provided the perfect storm to introduce such policies as the Race to the Top in conjunction with the Common Core Standards. The infusion of funds in education policy and reform at a time when the need was greatest was a major factor in the successful implementation of said policies. Consequently, the implementation of these education reforms raised the question of whether the federal government “was buying reform and expanding its role in education policy” (Young and Fusarelli, p. 212).

5.1.4 Privatization and Federal Government Control

As the role of private interest groups and the federal government in education reform have become more extensive, autonomy of states to implement education policy has decreased. This argument is based on the fact that independent billionaires, such as Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, have provided considerable financial support to organizations that helped implement and fund Common Core Standard initiatives across the country. Additionally, the federal government has been providing increased conditional funding to states since the implementation of the NCLB and continuing with the Race to the Top program. Never before in United States education history has there been such public momentum and driving support, both financially and rhetorically, for the implementation of common standards across all states.

Specifically, Bill Gates has been accused of single-handedly driving the implementation of the Common Core Standards and in fact, some dissenters of this policy have made the conclusion that the Common Core is Gates’ personal education reform policy. This conclusion was reached based on his unwavering public rhetoric on standardizing curriculum and his trail of funding that

supports numerous education institutions and agencies across the country. In a *New York Times* article, Sam Dillon (2011) exposed what had appeared to be a grass-roots advocacy for Common Core, but was actually funded through the Gates Foundation and labeled the policy as his personal agenda. The article stated:

The [Gates] foundation paid a New York philanthropic advisory firm \$3.5 million “to mount and support public education and advocacy campaigns.” It also paid a string of universities to support pieces of the Gates agenda. Harvard, for instance, got \$3.5 million to place “strategic data fellows” who could act as “entrepreneurial change agents” in school districts in Boston, Los Angeles and elsewhere. The foundation has given to the two national teachers’ unions — as well to groups whose mission seems to be to criticize them (para. 12).

As noted in Chapter Three, the funding provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation supported numerous state agencies, school funding organizations, and educational institutions at various levels across the country in an effort to expedite the implementation of the Common Core Standards. Critics of Gates’ involvement with education reform policy also claim that the Common Core is based on Microsoft’s corporate employee model. In an article for *AlterNet.org*, David Morris (2013) reflected upon Gates’ “imposing the Microsoft model” in the public school systems and how Microsoft has since abandoned said model because it did not work. Morris wrote:

Now, just as public school systems have widely adopted the Microsoft model in order to win the Race to the Top, it turns out that Microsoft realizes its model has led the once highly competitive company in a race to the bottom.

In a widely circulated 2012 article in *Vanity Fair*, two-time George Polk Award winner Kurt Eichenwald concluded that stacked ranking “effectively crippled Microsoft’s ability to innovate.” He writes, “Every current and former Microsoft employee I interviewed—every one—cited stack ranking as the most destructive process inside of Microsoft, something that drove out untold numbers of employees. It leads to employees focusing on competing with each other rather than competing with other companies.”

Sue Altman at *Edu Shyster* vividly sums up the frustration of a nation of educators at this new development. “So let me get this straight. The big business method of evaluation that now rules our schools is no longer the big business method of evaluation? And collaboration and teamwork, which have been abandoned by our schools in favor of the big business method of evaluation, is in?” (para. 7-9)

The competitive nature of what is called standardized curriculum in United States schools has been a model within Microsoft’s organization, and it failed to sustain itself because of its destructive effect on employees. The argument is that this type of corporate structure in the public school systems will eventually fail as well.

The corporatized feel to the Common Core has been compared to the “factory-line thinking” of the early twentieth century with regard to “uniformity and standardization” (Ravitch, 2014a). The infusion of money from both the federal government and wealthy billionaires have produced an education policy that has never before inflicted so many changes on its teachers, students, and administrators. As a result, “our students are the most over-tested in the world and no other high performing nation judges the quality of teachers by the test scores of their students” (Ravitch, 2014a).

The drawbacks of the NCLB policy has depicted the progression of economic and cultural capital influencing the path of education policy in the United States. The underlying issues relating to the absence of high student performance should not be judged by the teacher test scores, but rather by the contextual situation of the individual student along with his/her needs in the classroom. The fact that the federal government is more concerned with global competitiveness in the workforce is a consideration in the motives behind such drastic measures in the United States school system. As previously stated, unless the underlying socioeconomic causes of low performance is addressed, the achievement gap will not see any significantly positive changes. Additionally, if these issues continue unaddressed, a repertoire of inadequate and unrealistic education reform policies will continue to emerge resulting in a disruption of the social and intellectual development of school age children in the United States.

5.2 The Contrarian Perspective: Non-Common Core States

As noted in Chapter Two, 46 states initially adopted the Common Core Standards; however, there were four states which chose not to adopt these standards, but instead decided to implement their own state formulated education reform. So, why have some of these states chosen to opt out of the Common Core standards? The reasons come down to three major issues: 1) financial cost of implementation, 2) manpower and effort for implementation, and 3) resistance to government intervention (Rix, 2013). The states that have not adopted the standards since the beginning are Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia. Minnesota partially adopted the standards and has since chosen not to fully adopt them. Those states that initially adopted the Common Core but have now withdrawn their support as of June 2014 are Indiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. This now brings the Common Core adoptive states down to forty-two as of April 2016 (see Appendix B). Consequently, there are several other states that continue to examine the drawbacks

of the Common Core with the prospect of removing the policy from their schools. The latest states where the Common Core has become a contested policy is in Missouri, Maine, and Ohio (Camera, 2015). For the sake of this research, a brief overview of what the original four non-adopting states (Alaska, Nebraska, Texas, and Virginia) have implemented in place of the more widely accepted Common Core Standards will be discussed.

Although the non-Common Core states have provided school systems with their own set of standards, research suggest that in some cases they are similar to the Common Core Standards. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), for instance, has implemented the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) program in their school system (Texas Education Agency, 2016). Standards for all subject areas, from math and English language arts to health education and physical education are outlined. The standards include accountability guidelines for students and teachers with a testing program called the State of Texas Assessment and Academic Readiness (STAAR). One major similarity with the Common Core Standards is that annual assessments are administered through the Texas Education Agency for most subjects from grades 3 through 8 (Texas Education Agency, 2016). The rigorous curriculum and assessment standards are very similar to that of the Common Core; however, Texas has maintained control over their education policy by not adopting the latest government backed initiatives.

In Alaska, education standards are outlined specifically for teachers, schools, and administrators by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Their focus with regard to teaching students provides a more generalized approach to accommodating student needs in the classroom that focuses on “accurately identifying and teaching to the developmental abilities of students” (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2016b). In addition, teachers are required to “teach students with respect to their individual and cultural characteristics”

(Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2016b). Due to the diverse Alaskan demographic, a more holistic approach to teaching students has been implemented in their school systems. Although they do not subscribe to the Common Core, the standards denote that “instructional strategies support and promote student learning focused on the attainment of high standards by all students” (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2016a). In addition, in order to meet those high standards, schools must provide “curriculum, instruction, and assessment on clear student standards and objectives” (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2016a). Alaska’s standards deviate considerably from the Common Core with respect to their generalized implications. In an effort to maintain state and local control over education policy, schools and teachers are given autonomy to define these standards within the parameters of these broad guidelines.

In Nebraska, the Department of Education has created similar strands of curriculum to the Common Core Standards; whereby, they apply both a language arts standard and a mathematics content standards from K-12 grades (Nebraska Department of Education, n.d. p. 1). As with the Common Core, the language arts standards are specific to each grade level through eighth grade, but then it deviates with grades 9 through 12 where they are labeled as high school, with no specific standards for each grade in that category (Nebraska Department of Education, n.d. p. 1). The mathematics subject area simply states that students must “make sense of problems and persevere in solving them” (Nebraska Department of Education, n.d. p. 16). Nebraska also provides detailed descriptions of eleven tenets of the career ready individual based on academic training in grades K-12. The illustration below depicts Nebraska’s version of the career-ready individual outlining these tenets in their documentation:



Figure 5.1: Characteristics of the Career Ready Individual
Source: Nebraska Department of Education

In Virginia, the Department of Education provides frameworks on the basis of what is called a Standard of Learning (SOL). The learning requirements are similarly aligned with the Common Core Standards in terms of the focus of each grade. The testing frequency is high, with “Students in grades 3-12 will take between 2-4 Standards of Learning (SOL) tests a year, depending on their grade level and the secondary courses taken during the year” (Virginia Department of Education, 2016). In addition, the testing of curriculum is conducted through computer adaptive testing using a software program called TestNav (Virginia Department of Education, 2016). The purpose of computer adaptive testing is that it “provides each student with an assessment customized to his or her ability level” (Virginia Department of Education, 2016). Virginia also claims to have input from teachers with regard to testing content and touts the testing as “an objective means for measuring achievement gaps between student subgroups and for determining the progress of schools, divisions and the state toward closing these gaps” (Virginia Department of Education, 2016).

Although these states claim to have deviated from the Common Core Standards, all but Alaska have implemented similar standards with regard to assessments and standardized grade level curriculum. The major difference between those states with similar policies and Common Core states is that the assessment practices do not begin until the third or fourth grade. Alaska does not subscribe to any particular standardized assessments; however, the other states do. Despite the fact that these states have not adopted the Common Core Standards, the standards they have implemented are sufficient to meet the government qualifications in terms of satisfying federal funding allocations. Thus, they are still qualified to apply for federal funds in the wake of Race to the Top mandates for common standards.

5.3 The Effects of Education Reform Policy: Are Students College-Ready?

As demonstrated by the research presented here, the current education policies were designed to lead the United States on a trajectory resulting in college and career readiness for all students in all school systems. As the discourse proclaims, the intention of high standards, rigorous curriculum, and assessments is to produce a more competitive workforce in addition to producing students with higher academic proficiencies. Nearly seven years since the inception of the Common Core Standards, the question remains, are graduating high school students ready for college?

In a post-NCLB and Common Core Standards implementation era, the data compiled by American College Testing (ACT) in 2015 still finds that most students were deemed not college-ready. As depicted in the figure below, the readiness of high school graduates in the four major subject areas from 2011 to 2015 have mostly decreased with the exception of the Science subject area, where that proficiency increased by eight percent over four years.

Subject	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
English	66%	67%	64%	64%	64%
Reading	52%	52%	44%	44%	46%
Mathematics	45%	46%	44%	43%	42%
Science	30%	31%	36%	37%	38%
All Four Subjects	25%	25%	26%	26%	28%

Figure 5.2: Percent of 2011-2015 ACT-Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks

Source: <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/condition-of-college-and-career-readiness-report->

What do these statistics say about the standardized testing and assessment efforts that have dominated public schools since the early 2000s? These results, year after year, bring into question the validity of the current education reform policy. The evidence presented suggests that either the ACT testing is not aligned with student cognitive abilities resulting from the latest education reforms or that students are not learning what is necessary to prepare them for post-secondary education. There may be truth in both suggestions, whereas a redesign of the SAT and ACT exams have been publicly advocated. In addition statistics from colleges continually show that students are not ready for post-secondary education.

As Bill Gates and President Obama have argued, standardized curriculum is the gateway to college and career readiness. As a result of this rhetoric, the majority of the public has perceived their solution to be the answer for student college readiness as well. Although, there may be some gains in student performance with the implementation of any new reforms. Overall, the statistical evidence continues to prove otherwise. If students continue to be assessed for college readiness with such tests as the ACT, PSAT, and SAT, and the results remain deficient by government expectations, one would conclude that these reforms are not working. Prior to the implementation of such reforms as the NCLB and Common Core Standards, these were the arguments for supporters of these policies. Now that we are sixteen years into the 21st century, what is left for

politicians and billionaires to argue in terms of reforms that would supposedly improve student performance across all sectors? The questions that remain may be troubling in terms of curriculum alignment from kindergarten to the completion of college, including college readiness test scores. The United States must ask itself whether there is only one good solution to education reform and consequently, there must be an end to the delusion that 100% proficiency in student learning can be achieved.

5.4 The Future of United States Education Reform Policy: Neoliberalism and Privatization

There is a mix of rhetoric in terms of the appropriate path for the future of the United States public education system. The privatization movement has been said to endanger the future of the United States, as a country and as a people. The government driven policies backed by the world's wealthiest citizens have been labeled a precedent for diminished state and local control over education policy. The neoliberal progressive crusade of competitive education has left many dissenters to question the underlying motives in implementing such an extreme capitalistic view of education reform.

The opposition remains strong against both privatization and federal government control over the United States public education system. Opponents of current policies believe that privatization will cause more destruction within the education system. Ravitch (2014b) contends "that privatizing our public schools is a risky and dangerous project...it will hurt children, shatter communities, and damage our society" (p. xii). One of the privatization efforts in education has been to gain increased funding for charter schools. Charter schools are defined as "independently managed, publicly funded operating under a charter or contract between the school and the state or local jurisdiction, allowing for significant autonomy and flexibility" (National Charter School Resource Center, 2016). The charter school industry has been consistently supported by the

federal government and more so during the past decade. These schools are competing with public schools because “many charters are subsidized by additional millions of dollars in private donations which enables them to provide services, such as tutoring and mandatory summer school, which many public schools cannot” (Ravitch, 2011a).

In addition to charter school popularity, a voucher program designed to award full scholarships to public school students has also been a continuing trend in the move toward privatized education options. However, this option is actually a state funded initiative, and in some cases a federally funded initiative. In 2004, the school districts of Washington, D.C. became the first to have a federally funded private school voucher program (National Conference of State Legislators, 2016). The intention of these voucher programs is to accommodate “low-income students that meet a specified income threshold, students attending chronically low performing schools, students with disabilities, or students in military families or foster care” (National Conference of State Legislators, 2016). As of 2016, there are thirteen states and the District of Columbia offering school voucher programs around the country.

The major issue in the arguments for and against privatization rests with the fact that each time a child is placed through this program, funds are taken away from the public schools. Essentially, the funds are reallocated to the private school based on the students’ choice in education. Proponents of this program argue that “private schools have more flexibility in staffing, budgeting and curriculum than even charter schools...and this flexibility fosters the best environment for market competition and cost efficiency” (National Conference of State Legislators, 2016). As supporters of this type of program advocate for “market competition” in school systems, this strategy is clearly indicative of the neoliberal movement in education. In contrary, those in opposition to the voucher program proclaim that this removes much need

funding from public schools. Additionally, the voucher program represents a violation of church and state by providing “government incentives to attend private religious schools” (National Conference of State Legislators, 2016). As Ravitch (2014) contends, the capitalist economy was not intended as a model for education reform:

The free market works well in producing goods and services, but it produces extreme inequality, and it has a high rate of failure. That is not the way we want our schools to work. The core principle of American public education is supposed to be equality of educational opportunity, not a race to the top or a free market of choices with winners and losers (p. 304).

Ravitch also contends that conducting schools like a business involves turmoil and creates an unsettling environment for students. In the wake of financial struggles, schools should not be opening and closing like a business, this makes for a very disruptive and chaotic education experience for the students. Ravitch continues:

But children do not thrive on turmoil and instability. Chaos is not good for children. Chaos and disruption are not good for families and communities. There is nothing creative about closing a school that is a fixture in its community. If it is struggling, it needs help. It may need extra staff, extra resources, and expert supervision. It doesn't need to be shuttered like a shoe store. No school was ever saved or improved by closing it (p. 305).

The neoliberal movement has punctured an even deeper wound in the United States education system by advocating schools be treated like businesses. The “free market” system is not a symbol of continuity and prosperity for students, but rather a destructive force in the nation's education system. The government continues to be driving the global competitiveness ideology along with advocating standardized curriculum as the solution to higher student proficiency. The

politicians and billionaires who possess the most cultural and economic capital have continually convinced the public that such policies as the NCLB and Common Core Standards were a necessary step in education reform. As with previous education reform policies, results will continue to show that there is not just one solution to education reform policy. In addition, the United States must not punish schools for their lack of resources and performance, but rather assist those schools and districts with the most need in order to move forward.

5.5 Conclusion

Throughout history, the power of rhetoric on education reform policy has been shown to invoke changes during turbulent economic and social times within society. The advent of wars, democracy, capitalism, immigration, economic recessions and depressions, and advances in manufacturing and technology, have been driving factors throughout history in the defining and redefining of the United States education experience. As United States society becomes more central to a global economic structure, politicians and corporate executives continue to advocate for an increased capitalist configuration within the education system.

In underscoring the dangers and drawbacks of the current standardized curriculum in public schools, the rhetoric of dissenters of this policy are on a mission to prevent further destruction of the very core of the United States education system. The constant changes in education policy since 2002 have forced the nation to examine the direction of school curriculum, the quality of teacher education, and school administrator policies to the degree to where it has reached diminishing returns. The United States is a nation that has traditionally examined programs and practices in an effort to better serve those who are receiving the services. The persistent drive for improvement and betterment of society as a whole continues to be a priority; however, the strong

rhetoric of policies that are not proven should not be implemented on a national scale without proof positive results.

The contention that all students can achieve expected performance levels with standardized curriculum and testing is a fallacy. The social construction of society dictates a level of inequality from gender to race, from wealth to poverty, and from sickness to health. Women were the first marginalized subgroup of a nation of new immigrants back in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620, and from that point forward the colonialization of other subgroups became the next marginalized population. The state of public education is mirrored off of society, and the fact that races of color other than white are consistently falling behind in education proficiency is indicative of a nation that both currently and historically marginalized subgroups of the population. Whether talking about equal pay for women, economic inequities, or racial discrimination, the reality is that the history of the United States has been built on the notion of inequality, resulting in the manifestation of a capitalist society.

The irony in the rhetoric of such figures as Bill Gates and President Obama is that they are speaking from a position of privilege and power. Their education directive for a nation of people is predicated upon their own cultural and economic capital. As hegemonic representations of a society, Gates and Obama project an image of knowing what is best for all of society and during periods of economic turbulence, the masses are persuaded by the “common sense” rhetoric these powerful men deliver to a waiting public. In this dichotomy of desire for less government intervention in the school system and the need for economic stability during a recession, the compliance of the public is a natural course of political and social events. In order for the United States to find its “best” path for education reform, policies must be tried and discussed through an intelligent discourse that broaches the very nature and moral fiber of the United States trajectory

as a nation. Without the discourse explored here and the rhetoric of politicians and wealthy billionaires such as President Obama and Bill Gates, public education would not be progressing in a direction that aligns with technological and societal advancements. However, as a nation, the United States must temper its competitive nature with global counterparts and nurture the societal issues that prevent subgroups from advancing in the education system. This involves addressing social, economic, and racial disparities that divide students in the classroom in their quest for quality education instead of unite them. The standardized testing and assessments have proven a divisive measure that must diminish in order for the individual student to flourish in the classroom. As a nation, the United States must redirect the trajectory of education reforms by placing the students' socioeconomic needs on equal footing with their educational needs in order to address and alleviate the various forms of inequality that exist. If the nation continues to ignore these issues, the United States will continue to follow a path guided by unrealistic expectations propagated by a capitalist economic system.

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Appendix A – American Education System Timeline

1607 – The first permanent English settlement in North America is established by the Virginia Company at Jamestown in what is now the state of Virginia.

1620 - The Mayflower arrives at Cape Cod, bringing the "Pilgrims" who establish the Plymouth Colony. Many of the Pilgrims are Puritans who had fled religious persecution in England. Their religious views come to dominate education in the New England colonies.

1635 - The first Latin Grammar School (Boston Latin School) is established. Latin Grammar Schools are designed for sons of certain social classes who are destined for leadership positions in church, state, or the courts.

1635 - The first "free school" in Virginia opens. However, education in the Southern colonies is more typically provided at home by parents or tutors.

1636 - Harvard College, the first higher education institution in what is now the United States, is established in Newtowne (now Cambridge), Massachusetts.

1638 - The first printing press in the American Colonies is set up at Harvard College.

1640 - Henry Dunster becomes President of Harvard College. He teaches all the courses himself!

1642 - The Massachusetts Bay School Law is passed. It requires that parents ensure their children know the principles of religion and the capital laws of the commonwealth.

1647 - The Massachusetts Law of 1647, also known as the Old Deluder Satan Act, is passed. It decrees that every town of at least 50 families hire a schoolmaster who would teach the town's children to read and write and that all towns of at least 100 families should have a Latin grammar school master who will prepare students to attend Harvard College.

1690 - John Locke publishes his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, which conveys his belief that the human mind is a tabula rasa, or blank slate, at birth and knowledge is derived through experience, rather than innate ideas as was believed by many at that time. Locke's views concerning the mind and learning greatly influence American education.

1690 - The first New England Primer is printed in Boston. It becomes the most widely-used schoolbook in New England.

1693 - John Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education is published, describing his views on educating upper class boys to be moral, rationally-thinking, and reflective "young gentlemen." His ideas regarding educating the masses are conveyed in On Working Schools, published in 1697, which focused on the importance of developing a work ethic.

1693 - The College of William and Mary is established in Virginia. It is the second college to open in colonial America and has the distinction of being Thomas Jefferson's college.

1698 - The first publicly supported library in the U.S. is established in Charles Town, South Carolina. Two years later, the General Assembly of South Carolina passes the first public library law.

1710 - Christopher Dock, a Mennonite and one of Pennsylvania's most famous educators, arrives from Germany and later opens a school in Montgomery County, PA. Dock's book, *Schul-Ordnung* (meaning school management), published in 1770, is the first book about teaching printed in colonial America. Typical of those in the middle colonies, schools in Pennsylvania are established not only by the Mennonites, but by the Quakers and other religious groups as well.

1734 – Christian von Wolff describes the human mind as consisting of powers or faculties. Called Faculty Psychology, this doctrine holds that the mind can best be developed through "mental discipline" or tedious drill and repetition of basic skills and the eventual study of abstract subjects such as classical philosophy, literature, and languages. This viewpoint greatly influences American education throughout the 19th Century and beyond.

1743 - Benjamin Franklin forms the American Philosophical Society, which helps bring ideas of the European Enlightenment, including those of John Locke, to colonial America. Emphasizing secularism, science, and human reason, these ideas clash with the religious dogma of the day, but greatly influence the thinking of prominent colonists, including Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

1751 - Benjamin Franklin helps to establish the first "English Academy" in Philadelphia with a curriculum that is both classical and modern, including such courses as history, geography, navigation, surveying, and modern as well as classical languages. The academy ultimately becomes the University of Pennsylvania.

1752 - St. Matthew Lutheran School, one of the first Lutheran "parish schools" in North America, is founded in New York City by Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, after whom Muhlenberg College in Allentown Pennsylvania is named.

1754 - The French and Indian War begins in colonial America as the French and their Indian allies fight the English for territorial control.

1762 - Swiss-born Jean-Jacques Rousseau's book, *Emile, ou l'éducation*, which describes his views on education, is published. Rousseau's ideas on the importance early childhood are in sharp contrast with the prevailing views of his time and influence not only contemporary philosophers, but also 20th-Century American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey.

1763 - The French are defeated, and the French and Indian War ends with the Treaty of Paris. It gives most French territory in North America to England.

1766 - The Moravians, a protestant denomination from central Europe, establish the village of Salem in North Carolina. Six years later (1772), they found a school for girls, which later becomes Salem College, a liberal arts college for women with a current enrollment of

approximately 1100.

1779 – Thomas Jefferson proposes a two-track educational system, with different tracks for "the laboring and the learned."

1783 to 1785 - Because of his dissatisfaction with English textbooks of the day, Noah Webster writes *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, consisting of three volumes: a spelling book, a grammar book, and a reader. They become very widely used throughout the United States. In fact, the spelling volume, later renamed the *American Spelling Book* and often called the *Blue-Backed Speller*, has never been out of print!

1785 - The Land Ordinance of 1785 specifies that the western territories are to be divided into townships made up of 36-acre sections, one of which was to be set aside "for the maintenance of public schools."

1787 - The Constitutional Convention assembles in Philadelphia. Later that year, the constitution is endorsed by the Confederation Congress (the body that governed from 1781 until the ratification of the U.S. Constitution) and sent to state legislatures for ratification. The document does not include the words education or school.

1787 - The Northwest Ordinance is enacted by the Confederation Congress. It provides a plan for western expansion and bans slavery in new states. Specifically recognizing the importance of education, Act 3 of the document begins, "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." Perhaps of more of practical importance, it stipulates that a section of land in every township of each new state be reserved for the support of education.

1787 - The Young Ladies Academy opens in Philadelphia and becomes the first academy for girls in America.

1791 - The Bill of Rights is passed by the first Congress of the new United States. No mention is made of education in any of the amendments. However, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution states that powers not delegated to the federal government "are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people." Thus, education becomes a function of the state rather than the federal government.

1817 - The Connecticut Asylum at Hartford for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons opens. It is the first permanent school for the deaf in the U.S. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc are the school's co-founders. In 1864, Thomas Gallaudet's son, Edward Miner Gallaudet, helps to start Gallaudet University, the first college specifically for deaf students.

1821 - The first public high school, Boston English High School, opens.

1823 - Catherine Beecher founds the Hartford Female Seminary, a private school for girls in Hartford, Connecticut. She goes on to found more schools and become a prolific writer. Her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, an influential abolitionist, is the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

1827 - The state of Massachusetts passes a law requiring towns of more than 500 families to have a public high school open to all students.

1829 - The New England Asylum for the Blind, now the Perkins School for the Blind, opens in Massachusetts, becoming the first school in the U.S. for children with visual disabilities.

1836 - The first of William Holmes McGuffey's readers is published. Their secular tone sets them apart from the Puritan texts of the day. The McGuffey Readers, as they came to be known, are among the most influential textbooks of the 19th Century.

1837 - Horace Mann becomes Secretary of the newly formed Massachusetts State Board of Education. A visionary educator and proponent of public (or "free") schools, Mann works tirelessly for increased funding of public schools and better training for teachers. As Editor of the Common School Journal, his belief in the importance of free, universal public education gains a national audience. He resigns his position as Secretary in 1848 to take the Congressional seat vacated by the death of John Quincy Adams and later becomes the first president of Antioch College.

1837 - Louisville, Kentucky appoints the first school superintendent.

1837 - Eighty students arrive at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, the first college for women in the U.S. Its founder/president is Mary Lyon.

1837 - The African Institute (later called the Institute for Colored Youth) opens in Cheyney, Pennsylvania. Now called Cheyney University, it the oldest institution of higher learning for African Americans.

1839 - The first state funded school specifically for teacher education (then known as "normal" schools) opens in Lexington, Massachusetts.

1848 - Samuel Gridley Howe helps establish the Experimental School for Teaching and Training Idiotic Children, the first school of its kind in the U.S.

1849 - Elizabeth Blackwell graduates from Geneva Medical College, becoming the first woman to graduate from medical school. She later becomes a pioneer in the education of women in medicine.

1852 - Massachusetts enacts the first mandatory attendance law. By 1885, 16 states have compulsory-attendance laws, but most of those laws are sporadically enforced at best. All states have them by 1918.

1853 - Pennsylvania begins funding the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children, a private school for children with intellectual disabilities.

1854 -The Boston Public Library opens to the public. It is the first "free municipal library" in the

U.S.

1854 - Ashmun Institute, now Lincoln University, is founded on October 12, and as Horace Mann Bond, the university's eighth president states in his book, *Education for Freedom: A History of Lincoln University*, it becomes the "first institution anywhere in the world to provide higher education in the arts and sciences for male youth of African descent." The university's many distinguished alumni include Langston Hughes and Thurgood Marshall.

1856 - The first kindergarten in the U.S. is started in Watertown, Wisconsin, founded by Margarethe Schurz. Four years later, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody opens the first "formal" kindergarten in Boston, MA.

1857 - The National Teachers Association (now the National Education Association) is founded by forty-three educators in Philadelphia.

1862 - The First Morrill Act, also known as the "Land Grant Act" becomes law. It donates public lands to states, the sale of which will be used for the "endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life." Many prominent state universities can trace their roots to this forward-thinking legislation.

1867 - The Department of Education is created in order to help states establish effective school systems.

1867 - After hearing of the desperate situation facing schools in the south, George Peabody funds the two-million-dollar Peabody Education Fund to aid public education in southern states.

1867 - Howard University is established in Washington D.C. to provide education for African American youth "in the liberal arts and sciences." Early financial support is provided by the Freedmen's Bureau.

1869 - Boston creates the first public day school for the deaf.

1873 - The Panic of 1873 causes bank foreclosures, business failures, and job loss. The economic depression that follows results in reduced revenues for education. Southern schools are hit particularly hard, making a bad situation even worse.

1873 - The Society to Encourage Studies at Home is founded in Boston by Anna Eliot Ticknor, daughter of Harvard professor George Ticknor. Its purpose is to allow women the opportunity for study and enlightenment and becomes the first correspondence school in the United States.

1874 - The Michigan State Supreme Court rules that Kalamazoo may levy taxes to support a public high school, setting an important precedent for similar rulings in other states.

1876 - Edouard Seguin becomes the first President of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons, which evolves into the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

1876 - Meharry Medical College is founded in Nashville, Tennessee. It is the first medical school in the south for African Americans.

1876 - The Dewey Decimal System, developed by Melvil Dewey in 1873, is published and patented. The DDC is still the world's most widely-used library classification system.

1879 - The first Indian boarding school opens in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It becomes the model for a total of 26 similar schools, all with the goal of assimilating Indian children into the mainstream culture. The schools leave a controversial legacy. Though some see them as a noble, albeit largely unsuccessful experiment, many view their legacy to be one of alienation and "cultural dislocation." The Carlisle Indian Industrial School closes in 1918. Famous athlete Jim Thorpe is among the school's thousands of alumni.

1881 - Booker T. Washington becomes the first principal of the newly-opened normal school in Tuskegee, Alabama, now Tuskegee University.

1889 - Jane Addams and her college friend Ellen Gates Starr found Hull House in a Chicago, Illinois neighborhood of recent European immigrants. It is the first settlement house in the U.S. Included among its many services are a kindergarten and a night school for adults. Hull House continues to this day to offer educational services to children and families.

1890 - The Second Morrill Act is enacted. It provides for the "more complete endowment and support of the colleges" through the sale of public lands. Part of this funding leads to the creation of 16 historically black land-grant colleges.

1892 - Formed by the National Education Association to establish a standard secondary school curriculum, the Committee of Ten, recommends a college-oriented high school curriculum.

1900 - The Association of American Universities is founded to promote higher standards and put U.S. universities on an equal footing with their European counterparts.

1901 - Joliet Junior College, in Joliet, Illinois, opens. It is the first public community college in the U.S.

1904 - Mary McLeod Bethune, an African American educator, founds the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in Daytona Beach, Florida. It merges with the Cookman Institute in 1923 and becomes a coeducational high school, which eventually evolves into Bethune-Cookman College, now Bethune-Cookman University.

1905 - Alfred Binet's article, "New Methods for the Diagnosis of the Intellectual Level of Subnormals," is published in France. It describes his work with Theodore Simon in the

development of a measurement instrument that would identify students with mental retardation. The Binet-Simon Scale, as it is called, is an effective means of measuring intelligence.

1905- The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is founded. It is chartered by an act of Congress in 1906, the same year the Foundation encouraged the adoption of a standard system for equating "seat time" (the amount of time spent in a class) to high school credits. Still in use today, this system came to be called the "Carnegie Unit." Other important achievements of the Foundation during the first half of the 20th Century include the "landmark 'Flexner Report' on medical education, the development of the Graduate Record Examination, the founding of the Educational Testing Service, and the creation of the Teachers Insurance Annuity Association of America (TIAA-CREF)." See the Carnegie Foundation's home page for additional information.

1909 - Educational reformer Ella Flagg Young becomes superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools. She is the first female superintendent of a large city school system. One year later she is elected president of the National Education Association.

1909 - Ellen Swallow Richards, chemist, prominent water scientist, and the first woman to attend MIT, is instrumental in founding the American Home Economics Association, now the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

1909 - In order to improve high school graduation rates, the Columbus Ohio School Board authorizes the creation of junior high schools. Indianola Junior High School opens that fall and becomes the first junior high school in the U.S.

1911 - The first Montessori school in the U.S. opens in Tarrytown, New York. Two years later (1913), Maria Montessori visits the U.S., and Alexander Graham Bell and his wife Mabel found the Montessori Educational Association at their Washington, DC, home

1913 - Edward Lee Thorndike's book, Educational Psychology: The Psychology of Learning, is published. It describes his theory that human learning involves habit formation, or connections between stimuli (or situations as Thorndike preferred to call them) and responses (Connectionism). He believes that such connections are strengthened by repetition ("Law of Exercise") and achieving satisfying consequences ("Law of Effect"). These ideas, which contradict traditional faculty psychology and mental discipline, come to dominate American educational psychology for much of the Twentieth Century and greatly influence American educational practice.

1916 - Louis M. Terman and his team of Stanford University graduate students complete an American version of the Binet-Simon Scale. The Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale becomes a widely-used individual intelligence test, and along with it, the concept of the intelligence quotient (or IQ) is born. The Fifth Edition of the Stanford-Binet Scales is among the most popular individual intelligence tests today. For additional information on the history of intelligence testing, see A.C.E. Detailed History of the I.Q. Test.

1916 - The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is founded. So is the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

1916 - John Dewey's *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* is published. Dewey's views help advance the ideas of the "progressive education movement." An outgrowth of the progressive political movement, progressive education seeks to make schools more effective agents of democracy. His daughter, Evelyn Dewey, coauthors *Schools of To-morrow* with her father, and goes on to write several books on her own.

1916 - The Bureau of Educational Experiments is founded in New York City by Lucy Sprague Mitchell with the purpose of studying child development and children's learning. It opens a laboratory nursery school in 1918 and in 1950 becomes the Bank Street College of Education. Its School for Children is now "an independent demonstration school for Bank Street College." This same year (1916), Mrs. Frank R. Lillie helps establish what would become the University of Chicago Nursery School.

1917 - The Smith-Hughes Act passes, providing federal funding for agricultural and vocational education. It is repealed in 1997.

1917 - As the U.S. enters W.W.I the army has no means of screening the intellectual ability of its recruits. Robert Yerkes, then President of the American Psychological Association and an army officer, becomes Chairman of the Committee on Psychological Examination of Recruits. The committee, which includes Louis Terman, has the task of developing a group intelligence test. He and his team of psychologists design the Army Alpha and Beta tests. Though these tests have little impact on the war, they lay the groundwork for future standardized tests.

1919 - The Progressive Education Association is founded with the goal of reforming American education.

1919 - All states have laws providing funds for transporting children to school.

1920 - John B. Watson and his assistant Rosalie Rayner conduct their experiments using classical conditioning with children. Often referred to as the Little Albert study, Watson and Rayner's work showed that children could be conditioned to fear stimuli of which they had previously been unafraid. This study could not be conducted today because of ethical safeguards currently in place.

1921 - Louis Terman launches a longitudinal study of "intellectually superior" children at Stanford University. The study continues into the 21st Century!

1922 - The International Council for Exceptional Children is founded at Columbia University Teachers College.

1922 - Abigail Adams Eliot, with help from Mrs. Henry Greenleaf Pearson, establishes the Ruggles Street Nursery School in Roxbury, MA, one of the first educational nursery schools in the U.S. It becomes the Eliot-Pearson Children's School and is now affiliated with the Eliot-

Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts University.

1924 - Max Wertheimer describes the principles of Gestalt Theory to the Kant Society in Berlin. Gestalt Theory, with its emphasis on learning through insight and grasping the whole concept, becomes important later in the 20th Century in the development of cognitive views of learning and teaching.

1925 - Tennessee vs. John Scopes ("the Monkey Trial") captures national attention as John Scopes, a high school biology teacher, is charged with the heinous crime of teaching evolution. The trial ends in Scopes' conviction. The evolution versus creationism controversy persists to this day.

1926 - The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is first administered. It is based on the Army Alpha test.

1929 - Jean Piaget's *The Child's Conception of the World* is published. His theory of cognitive development becomes an important influence in American developmental psychology and education.

1929 - The Great Depression begins with the stock market crash in October. The U.S. economy is devastated. Public education funding suffers greatly, resulting in school closings, teacher layoffs, and lower salaries.

1931 - Alvarez vs. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove (California) School District becomes the first successful school desegregation court case in the United States, as the local court forbids the school district from placing Mexican-American children in a separate "Americanization" school.

1935 - Congress authorizes the Works Progress Administration. Its purpose is to put the unemployed to work on public projects, including the construction of hundreds of school buildings.

1939 - Frank W. Cyr, a professor at Columbia University's Teachers College, organizes a national conference on student transportation. It results in the adoption of standards for the nation's school buses, including the shade of yellow.

1939 - The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (first called the Wechsler- Bellevue Intelligence Scale) is developed by David Wechsler. It introduces the concept of the "deviation IQ," which calculates IQ scores based on how far subjects' scores differ (or deviate) from the average (mean) score of others who are the same age, rather than calculating them with the ratio (MA/CA multiplied by 100) system. Wechsler intelligence tests, particularly the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, are still widely used in U.S. schools to help identify students needing special education.

1941 - The U.S. enters World War II after the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor on December 7. During the next four years, much of the country's resources go to the war effort. Education is put

on the back burner as many young men quit school to enlist; schools are faced with personnel problems as teachers and other employees enlist, are drafted, or leave to work in defense plants; school construction is put on hold.

1944 - The G.I. Bill of Rights officially known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, is signed by FDR on June 22. Some 7.8 million World War II veterans take advantage of the GI Bill during the seven years benefits are offered. More than two-million attend colleges or universities, nearly doubling the college population. About 238,000 become teachers. Because the law provides the same opportunity to every veteran, regardless of background, the long-standing tradition that a college education was only for the wealthy is broken.

1946 - At one minute after midnight on January 1st, Kathleen Casey-Kirschling is born, the first of nearly 78-million baby boomers, beginning a generation that results in unprecedented school population growth and massive social change. She becomes a teacher!

1946 - In the landmark court case of Mendez vs. Westminster and the California Board of Education, the U. S. District Court in Los Angeles rules that educating children of Mexican descent in separate facilities is unconstitutional, thus prohibiting segregation in California schools and setting an important precedent for Brown vs. Board of Education.

1946 - With thousands of veterans returning to college, The President's Commission on Higher Education is given the task of reexamining the role of colleges and universities in post-war America. The first volume of its report, often referred to as the Truman Commission Report, is issued in 1947 and recommends sweeping changes in higher education, including doubling college enrollments by 1960 and extending free public education through the establishment of a network of community colleges. This latter recommendation comes to fruition in the 1960s, during which community college enrollment more than triples.

1946 - Recognizing "the need for a permanent legislative basis for a school lunch program," the 79th Congress approves the National School Lunch Act.

1947 - In the case of Everson v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court rules by a 5-4 vote that a New Jersey law which allowed reimbursements of transportation costs to parents of children who rode public transportation to school, even if their children attended Catholic schools, did **NOT** violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

1948 - In the case of McCormack v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court rules that schools cannot allow "released time" during the school day which allows students to participate in religious education in their public school classrooms.

1950 - Public Law 81-740 grants a federal charter to the FFA and recognizes it as an integral part of the program of vocational agriculture. The law is revised in 1998 and becomes Public Law 105-225.

1953 - Burrhus Frederic (B.F.) Skinner's Science and Human Behavior is published. His form of behaviorism (operant conditioning), which emphasizes changes in behavior due to

reinforcement, becomes widely accepted and influences many aspects of American education

1954 - On May 17th, the U.S. Supreme Court announces its decision in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, ruling that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," thus overturning its previous ruling in the 1896 case of Plessy v. Ferguson. Brown v. Board of Education is actually a combination of five cases from different parts of the country. It is a historic first step in the long and still unfinished journey toward equality in U.S. education.

1956 – The *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals; Handbook I: Cognitive Domain* is published. Often referred to simply as “Bloom’s Taxonomy” because of its primary author, Benjamin S. Bloom, the document actually has four coauthors (M.D. Engelhart, E.J. Furst, W.H. Hill, and David Krathwohl). Still widely used today, Bloom’s Taxonomy divides the cognitive domain into six levels: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis. *Handbook II: Affective Domain*, edited by Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, is published in 1964. Taxonomies for the psychomotor domain have been published by other writers.

1957 - The Civil Rights Act of 1957 is voted into law in spite of Strom Thurmond's filibuster. Essentially a voting-rights bill, it is the first civil rights legislation since reconstruction and is a precursor to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

1958 - At least partially because of Sputnik, science and science education become important concerns in the U.S., resulting in the passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) which authorizes increased funding for scientific research as well as science, mathematics, and foreign language education.

1960 -First grader Ruby Bridges is the first African American to attend William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. She becomes a class of one as parents remove all Caucasian students from the school.

1962 - First published in 1934, Lev Vygotsky's book, *Thought and Language* is introduced to the English-speaking world. Though he lives to only 38, Vygotsky's ideas regarding the social nature of learning provide important foundational principles for contemporary social constructivist theories. He is perhaps best known for his concept of "Zone of Proximal Development."

1962 - In the case of Engel v. Vitale, the U. S. Supreme Court rules that the state of New York's Regents prayer violates the First Amendment. The ruling specifies that "state officials may not compose an official state prayer and require that it be recited in the public schools of the State at the beginning of each school day. . . ."

1963 - In the cases of School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp and Murray v. Curlett, the U. S. Supreme Court reaffirms Engel v. Vitale by ruling that "no state law or school board may require that passages from the Bible be read or that the Lord's Prayer be recited in the public schools . . . even if individual students may be excused from attending or participating . . ."

1963 - Samuel A. Kirk uses the term "learning disability" at a Chicago conference on children with perceptual disorders. The term sticks, and in 1964, the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, now the Learning Disabilities Association of America, is formed. Today, nearly one-half of all students in the U.S. who receive special education have been identified as having learning disabilities.

1963 - In response to the large number of Cuban immigrant children arriving in Miami after the Cuban Revolution, Coral Way Elementary School starts the first bilingual and bicultural public school in the United States.

1964 - The Civil Rights Act becomes law. It prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion or national origin.

1965 - The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is passed on April 9. Part of Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," it provides federal funds to help low-income students, which results in the initiation of educational programs such as Title I and bilingual education.

1965 - The Higher Education Act is signed at Southwest Texas State College on November 8. It increases federal aid to higher education and provides for scholarships, student loans, and establishes a National Teachers Corps.

1965 - Project Head Start, a preschool education program for children from low-income families, begins as an eight-week summer program. Part of the "War on Poverty," the program continues to this day as the longest-running anti-poverty program in the U.S.

1965 - Lyndon Johnson signs the Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, on October 3rd. It abolishes the National Origins Formula and results in unprecedented numbers of Asians and Latin Americans immigrating to the United States, making America's classrooms much more diverse.

1966 - The Equality of Educational Opportunity Study, often called the Coleman Report because of its primary author James S. Coleman, is conducted in response to provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Its conclusion that African American children benefit from attending integrated schools sets the stage for school "busing" to achieve desegregation.

1966 - Jerome Bruner's *Toward a Theory of Instruction* is published. His views regarding learning help to popularize the cognitive learning theory as an alternative to behaviorism.

1966 - Public Law 358, the Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966, provides not only educational benefits, but also home and farm loans as well as employment counseling and placement services for Vietnam veterans. More than 385,000 troops, serve in Vietnam during 1966. From 1965-1975, more than nine million American military personnel are on active military duty, about 3.4 million of whom serve in Southeast Asia.

1968 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Nobel Prize winner and leader of the American Civil Rights Movement, is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4th. The Martin Luther King, Jr.

Holiday, observed on the third Monday of January, celebrates his "life and legacy."

1968 - The Bilingual Education Act, also known as Title VII, becomes law. After many years of controversy, the law is repealed in 2002 and replaced by the No Child Left Behind Act.

1968 - The "Monkey Trial" revisited! In the case of Epperson et al. v. Arkansas, the U.S. supreme Court finds the state of Arkansas' law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in a public school or university unconstitutional.

1968 - Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm, an African American educator, becomes the first African American woman to be elected to the U.S. Congress.

1968 - McCarver Elementary School in Tacoma, Washington becomes the nation's first magnet school.

1969 - Herbert R. Kohl's book, *The Open Classroom*, helps to promote open education, an approach emphasizing student-centered classrooms and active, holistic learning. The conservative back-to-the-basics movement of the 1970s begins at least partially as a backlash against open education. .

1969 - On April 30th, the number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam stands at 543,482, the most at any time during the war. College enrollments swell as many young men seek student deferments from the draft; anti-war protests become commonplace on college campuses, and grade inflation begins as professors realize that low grades may change male students' draft status.

1970 - In his controversial book, *Deschooling Society*, Ivan Illich sharply criticizes traditional schools and calls for the end of compulsory school attendance.

1970 - Jean Piaget's book, *The Science of Education*, is published. His Learning Cycle model helps to popularize discovery-based teaching approaches, particularly in the sciences.

1970 - The case of Diana v. California State Board results in new laws requiring that children referred for possible special education placement be tested in their primary language.

1971 - In the case of Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania, the federal court rules that students with mental retardation are entitled to a free public education.

1972 - The Indian Education Act becomes law and establishes "a comprehensive approach to meeting the unique needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students"

1972 - The case of Mills v. the Board of Education of Washington, D.C. extends the PARC v. Pennsylvania ruling to other students with disabilities and requires the provision of "adequate alternative educational services suited to the child's needs, which may include special education . . ." Other similar cases follow.

1972 - Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 becomes law. Though many people associate this law only with girl's and women's participation in sports, Title IX prohibits discrimination based on sex in all aspects of education.

1972 - The Marland Report to Congress on gifted and talented education is issued. It recommends a broader definition of giftedness that is still widely accepted today.

1973 - Marian Wright Edelman founds the Children's Defense Fund, a non-profit child advocacy organization.

1973 - The Rehabilitation Act becomes law. Section 504 of this act guarantees civil rights for people with disabilities in the context of federally funded institutions and requires accommodations in schools including participation in programs and activities as well as access to buildings. Today, "504 Plans" are used to provide accommodations for students with disabilities who do not qualify for special education or an IEP.

1974 - In the Case of Lau v. Nichols, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that the failure of the San Francisco School District to provide English language instruction to Chinese-American students with limited English proficiency (LEP) is a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Though the case does not require a specific approach to teaching LEP students, it does require school districts to provide equal opportunities for all students, including those who do not speak English.

1974 - The Equal Educational Opportunities Act is passed. It prohibits discrimination and requires schools to take action to overcome barriers which prevent equal protection. The legislation has been particularly important in protecting the rights of students with limited English proficiency.

1974 - Federal Judge Arthur Garrity orders busing of African American students to predominantly white schools in order to achieve racial integration of public schools in Boston, MA. White parents protest, particularly in South Boston.

1974 - In the case of Milliken v. Bradley, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that outside suburbs were not responsible for segregation within the Detroit city schools, and the District Court could not "redraw the lines . . . to achieve racial balance." Therefore busing of students from Detroit to suburban schools was not required by law.

1975 - The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) becomes federal law. It requires that a free, appropriate public education, suited to the student's individual needs, and offered in the least restrictive setting be provided for all "handicapped" children. States are given until 1978 (later extended to 1981) to fully implement the law.

1975 - The National Association of Bilingual Education is founded.

1975 - *Newsweek's* December 8 cover story, "Why Johnny Can't Write," heats up the debate about national literacy and gives impetus to the back-to-the-basics movement.

1980 - The Refugee Act of 1980 is signed into law by President Jimmy Carter on March 18th. Building on the Immigration Act of 1965, it reforms immigration law to admit refugees for humanitarian reasons and results in the resettlement of more than three-million refugees in the United States including many children who bring special needs and issues to their classrooms.

1980 - Ronald Reagan is elected president, ushering in a new conservative era, not only in foreign and economic policy, but in education as well. However, he never carries out his pledge to reduce the federal role in education by eliminating the Department of Education, which had become a Cabinet level agency that same year under the Carter administration.

1981 - John Holt's book, *Teach Your Own: A Hopeful Path for Education*, adds momentum to the homeschooling movement.

1982 - Madeline C. Hunter's book, *Mastery Teaching*, is published. Her teaching model becomes widely used as teachers throughout the country attend her workshops and become "Hunterized."

1982 - In the case of Plyler v. Doe, the U.S. Supreme Court rules in a 5-4 decision that Texas law denying access to public education for undocumented school-age children violates the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. The ruling also found that school districts cannot charge tuition fees for the education of these children.

1982 - In the case of Board of Education v. Pico, the U.S. Supreme court rules that books cannot be removed from a school library because school administrators deemed their content to be offensive.

1983 - The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*, calls for sweeping reforms in public education and teacher training. Among their recommendations is a forward-looking call for expanding high school requirements to include the study of computer science.

1984 - Public Law 105-332, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, is passed with the goal of increasing the quality of vocational-technical education in the U.S. It is reauthorized in 1998 and again in 2006 as the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act (PL 109-270).

1984 -The Emergency Immigrant Education Act is enacted to provide services and offset the costs for school districts that have unexpectedly large numbers of immigrant students.

1989 - The University of Phoenix establishes their "online campus," the first to offer online bachelor's and master's degrees. It becomes the "largest private university in North America."

1990 - Teach for America is formed, reestablishing the idea of a National Teachers Corps.

1991 - Minnesota passes the first "charter school" law.

1992 - City Academy High School, the nation's first charter school, opens in St. Paul, Minnesota.

1993 - Jacqueline and Martin Brooks' *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classrooms* is published. It is one many books and articles describing constructivism, a view that learning best occurs through active construction of knowledge rather than its passive reception. Constructivist learning theory, with roots such as the work of Dewey, Bruner, Piaget, and Vygotsky, becomes extremely popular in the 1990s.

1993 - The Massachusetts Education Reform Act requires a common curriculum and statewide tests (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System). As has often been the case, other states follow Massachusetts' lead and implement similar, high-stakes testing programs.

1993 - Jones International University becomes the first university "to exist completely online."

1994 - The Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) is signed into law by President Bill Clinton on January 25th. It reauthorizes the ESEA of 1965 and includes reforms for Title I; increased funding for bilingual and immigrant education; and provisions for public charter schools, drop-out prevention, and educational technology.

1994 - As a backlash to illegal immigration, California voters pass Proposition 187, denying benefits, including public education, to undocumented aliens in California. It is challenged by the ACLU and other groups and eventually overturned.

1994 - CompuHigh is founded. It claims to be the first online high school.

1995 - Georgia becomes the first state to offer universal preschool to all four year olds whose parents choose to enroll them. More than half of the state's four year olds are now enrolled.

1996 - James Banks' book, *Multicultural Education: Transformative Knowledge and Action*, makes an important contribution to the growing body of scholarship regarding multiculturalism in education.

1996 - The Oakland, California School District sparks controversy as it proposes that Ebonics be recognized as the native language of African American children.

1996 - President Bill Clinton signs the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 into law on September 30th. It prohibits states from offering higher education benefit based on residency within a state (in-state tuition) to undocumented immigrants unless the benefit is available to any U.S. citizen or national. This law conflicts, however, with practices and laws in several U.S. states.

1997 - New York follows Georgia's lead and passes legislation that will phase in voluntary pre-kindergarten classes over a four-year period. However, preschool funding is a casualty of September 11, 2001 as New York struggles to recover. As of 2008, about 39% of the state's four

year olds, mostly from low-income families, are enrolled.

1998 - California voters pass Proposition 227, requiring that all public school instruction be in English. This time the law withstands legal challenges.

1998 - The Higher Education Act is amended and reauthorized requiring institutions and states to produce "report cards" about teacher education (See Title II).

2000 - Diane Ravitch's book, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*, criticizes progressive educational policies and argues for a more traditional, academically-oriented education. Her views, which are reminiscent of the "back to the basics" movement of the late 1970s and 1980s, are representative of the current conservative trend in education and the nation at large.

2001 - The controversial No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is approved by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. The law, which reauthorizes the ESEA of 1965 and replaces the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, mandates high-stakes student testing, holds schools accountable for student achievement levels, and provides penalties for schools that do not make adequate yearly progress toward meeting the goals of NCLB.

2002 - In the case of *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* the U.S. Supreme court rules that certain school voucher programs are constitutional and do not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

2002 - The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) is formally launched as an organization. Its goals include promoting the rights of young children and providing information about the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education.

2003 - The Higher Education Act is again amended and reauthorized, expanding access to higher education for low and middle income students, providing additional funds for graduate studies, and increasing accountability.

2003 - The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing K-12 online education, is "launched as a formal corporate entity."

2004 - H.R. 1350, The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), reauthorizes and modifies IDEA. Changes, which take effect on July 1, 2005, include modifications in the IEP process and procedural safeguards, increased authority for school personnel in special education placement decisions, and alignment of IDEA with the No Child Left Behind Act. The 2004 reauthorization also requires school districts to use the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach as a means for the early identification of students at risk for specific learning disabilities. RTI provides a three-tiered model for screening, monitoring, and providing increasing degrees of intervention using "research-based instruction" with the overall goal of reducing the need for special education services

2007 - On January 1, 2007, the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) became the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), joining the trend toward use of the term intellectual disability in place of mental retardation._

2007 - In the cases of *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No 1* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that race cannot be a factor in assigning students to high schools, thus rejecting integration plans in Seattle and Louisville, and possibly affecting similar plans in school districts around the nation.

2007 - Both the House and Senate pass the Fiscal Year 2008 Labor-HHS- Education appropriation bill which includes reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. However, the bill is vetoed by President Bush because it exceeds his budget request. Attempts to override the veto fall short.

2008 - Barack Obama defeats John McCain and is elected the 44th President of the United States. Substantial changes in the No Child Left Behind Act are eventually expected, but with two ongoing wars as well as the current preoccupation with our nation's economic problems, reauthorization of NCLB is unlikely to happen any time soon.

2009 - The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 provides more than 90-billion dollars for education, nearly half of which goes to local school districts to prevent layoffs and for school modernization and repair. It includes the Race to the Top initiative, a 4.35-billion-dollar program designed to induce reform in K-12 education. For more information on the impact of the Recovery Act on education, go to ED.gov.

2009 - The Common Core State Standards Initiative, "a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers," is launched. It is expected that many, perhaps most, states will adopt them.

2009 - Quest to Learn (Q2L), the first school to teach primarily through game-based learning, opens in September in New York City with a class of sixth graders. There are plans to add a grade each year until the school serves students in grades six through twelve.

2010 - With the U.S. economy mired in the "great recession" and unemployment remaining high, states have massive budget deficits. Many teachers face layoffs.

2010 - New Texas social studies curriculum standards, described by some as "ultraconservative," spark controversy. Many fear they will affect textbooks and classrooms in other states.

2011 - Sylvia Mendez, whose parents were lead plaintiffs in the historic civil rights case, *Mendez vs. Westminster* and the California Board of Education, is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom on February 16th..

2011 - President Barack Obama announces on September 23 that the U.S. Department of Education is inviting each State educational agency to request flexibility regarding some

requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

2011 - Alabama becomes the first state "to require public schools to check the immigration status" of students. Though the law does not require schools to prohibit the enrollment nor report the names of undocumented children, opponents nevertheless contend it is unconstitutional based on the Plyer v. Doe ruling.

2012 - President Barack Obama announces on February 9 that the applications of ten states seeking waivers from some of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind law were approved. New Mexico's application is approved a few days later, bringing the number of states receiving waivers to 11. An additional 26 states apply for waivers in late February.

2012 - On July 6, Washington and Wisconsin become the two most recent states to be granted waivers from some requirements of the federal No Child left Behind law, bringing the total number of states granted waivers to 26. Several more states have submitted waiver applications and are waiting for approval.

2012 - As of December, 33 states and Washington, D.C. have been granted waivers from some No Child Left Behind requirements.

2013 - On January 11, the Washington Post reports that Seattle high school teachers have refused to give the district-mandated Measures of Academy Progress, joining a "growing grass-roots revolt against the excessive use of standardized tests."

2013 - On May 22, the Chicago Board of Education votes to close 50 schools, the largest mass closing in U.S. history. Mayor Rahm Emanuel and CPS officials claim the closures are not only necessary to reduce costs, but will also improve educational quality. However, Chicago teachers and other opponents say the closures disproportionately affect low-income and minority students, but their efforts to stop the closings, which included three lawsuits, were unsuccessful. Other cities, including Detroit, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., have also recently closed large numbers of public schools.

2013 - The most recent results of the Program for International Student Assessment, released December 2, 2013, show that the achievement of U.S. teenagers continues to lag behind that of their counterparts in other developed countries, particularly those in Asia.

2014 - President Barack Obama signs the 1.1-trillion dollar bipartisan budget bill on January 17. The bill restores some, but not all, of the cuts to federal education programs that resulted from sequestration. It is the first budget to be agreed to by our divided government since 2009!

2014 - On March 24, Indiana Governor Mike Pence signs legislation withdrawing the state from the Core Standards. Indiana becomes the first state to do so. However, aspects of the Common Core may still be included in Indiana's "new" standards.

2014 - The Civil Rights Project report, *Brown at 60: Great Progress, a Long Retreat, and an Uncertain Future*, is published on May 15. It shows what many teachers already know: a decline

in non-Hispanic Caucasian students, a large increase in Latino students, and the growth of segregation, both by race and poverty, particularly among Latinos in central cities and suburbs of the largest metropolitan areas.

2014 - In the case of Vergara v. California, the Superior Court of the State of California rules that laws regarding teacher tenure, seniority rights and dismissal are unconstitutional. California is not the only state where attempts are being made to weaken or eliminate teacher tenure protections.

2014 - As schools open this fall, a demographic milestone is reached: minority students enrolled in K-12 public school classrooms outnumber non-Hispanic Caucasians.

2015 - On January 9, President Barack Obama announces a plan to allow two years of free community college for all American students. However, with Republicans in control of both the House and Senate, there seems little hope that this proposal will be implemented any time soon.

2015 - Moody's Investors Service downgrades the Chicago Public Schools' debt to "junk status" one day after downgrading the City of Chicago's bonds to the same.

2015 - New York parents opt 150,000 kids out of standardized tests as the revolt against high-stakes testing grows.

2015 - President Obama joins the "too-much-testing" movement as his new plan calls for limiting "standardized testing to no more than 2% of class time."

2015 - On December 9, the U.S. Senate votes 85-12 to approve the Every Student Succeeds Act, and President Obama signs it into law on December 10. This latest version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) replaces No Child Left Behind and allows more state control in judging school quality.

Source: <http://www.eds-resources.com/educationhistorytimeline.html>

Note: Expressed written consent was given by Edward Sass, Ed.D. Professor Emeritus, College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University to use his timeline in this research paper.

Appendix B – A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform (1983)

Findings

We conclude that declines in educational performance are in large part the result of disturbing inadequacies in the way the educational process itself is often conducted. The findings that follow, culled from a much more extensive list, reflect four important aspects of the educational process: [content](#), [expectations](#), [time](#), and [teaching](#).

Findings Regarding Content

By content we mean the very "stuff" of education, the curriculum. Because of our concern about the curriculum, the Commission examined patterns of courses high school students took in 1964-69 compared with course patterns in 1976-81. On the basis of these analyses we conclude:

- Secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses. Students have migrated from vocational and college preparatory programs to "general track" courses in large numbers. The proportion of students taking a general program of study has increased from 12 percent in 1964 to 42 percent in 1979.
- This curricular smorgasbord, combined with extensive student choice, explains a great deal about where we find ourselves today. We offer intermediate algebra, but only 31 percent of our recent high school graduates complete it; we offer French I, but only 13 percent complete it; and we offer geography, but only 16 percent complete it. Calculus is available in schools enrolling about 60 percent of all students, but only 6 percent of all students complete it.
- Twenty-five percent of the credits earned by general track high school students are in physical and health education, work experience outside the school, remedial English and mathematics, and personal service and development courses, such as training for adulthood and marriage.

Findings Regarding Expectations

We define expectations in terms of the level of knowledge, abilities, and skills school and college graduates should possess. They also refer to the time, hard work, behavior, self-discipline, and motivation that are essential for high student achievement. Such expectations are expressed to students in several different ways:

- by grades, which reflect the degree to which students demonstrate their mastery of subject matter;
- through high school and college graduation requirements, which tell students which subjects are most important;
- by the presence or absence of rigorous examinations requiring students to demonstrate their mastery of content and skill before receiving a diploma or a degree;
- by college admissions requirements, which reinforce high school standards; and
- by the difficulty of the subject matter students confront in their texts and assigned readings.

Our analyses in each of these areas indicate notable deficiencies:

- The amount of homework for high school seniors has decreased (two-thirds report less than 1 hour a night) and grades have risen as average student achievement has been declining.
- In many other industrialized nations, courses in mathematics (other than arithmetic or general mathematics), biology, chemistry, physics, and geography start in grade 6 and are required of *all* students. The time spent on these subjects, based on class hours, is about three times that spent by even the most science-oriented U.S. students, i.e., those who select 4 years of science and mathematics in secondary school.
- A 1980 State-by-State survey of high school diploma requirements reveals that only eight States require high schools to offer foreign language instruction, but none requires students to take the courses. Thirty-five States require only 1 year of mathematics, and 36 require only 1 year of science for a diploma.
- In 13 States, 50 percent or more of the units required for high school graduation may be electives chosen by the student. Given this freedom to choose the substance of half or more of their education, many students opt for less demanding personal service courses, such as bachelor living.
- "Minimum competency" examinations (now required in 37 States) fall short of what is needed, as the "minimum" tends to become the "maximum," thus lowering educational standards for all.
- One-fifth of all 4-year public colleges in the United States must accept every high school graduate within the State regardless of program followed or grades, thereby serving notice to high school students that they can expect to attend college even if they do not follow a demanding course of study in high school or perform well.
- About 23 percent of our more selective colleges and universities reported that their general level of selectivity declined during the 1970s, and 29 percent reported reducing the number of specific high school courses required for admission (usually by dropping foreign language requirements, which are now specified as a condition for admission by only one-fifth of our institutions of higher education).
- Too few experienced teachers and scholars are involved in writing textbooks. During the past decade or so a large number of texts have been "written down" by their publishers to ever-lower reading levels in response to perceived market demands.
- A recent study by Education Products Information Exchange revealed that a majority of students were able to master 80 percent of the material in some of their subject-matter texts before they had even opened the books. Many books do not challenge the students to whom they are assigned.
- Expenditures for textbooks and other instructional materials have declined by 50 percent over the past 17 years. While some recommend a level of spending on texts of between 5 and 10 percent of the operating costs of schools, the budgets for basal texts and related materials have been dropping during the past decade and a half to only 0.7 percent today.

Findings Regarding Time

Evidence presented to the Commission demonstrates three disturbing facts about the use that American schools and students make of time: (1) compared to other nations, American students spend much less time on school work; (2) time spent in the classroom and on homework is often

used ineffectively; and (3) schools are not doing enough to help students develop either the study skills required to use time well or the willingness to spend more time on school work.

- In England and other industrialized countries, it is not unusual for academic high school students to spend 8 hours a day at school, 220 days per year. In the United States, by contrast, the typical school day lasts 6 hours and the school year is 180 days.
- In many schools, the time spent learning how to cook and drive counts as much toward a high school diploma as the time spent studying mathematics, English, chemistry, U.S. history, or biology.
- A study of the school week in the United States found that some schools provided students only 17 hours of academic instruction during the week, and the average school provided about 22.
- A California study of individual classrooms found that because of poor management of classroom time, some elementary students received only one-fifth of the instruction others received in reading comprehension.
- In most schools, the teaching of study skills is haphazard and unplanned. Consequently, many students complete high school and enter college without disciplined and systematic study habits.

Findings Regarding Teaching

The Commission found that not enough of the academically able students are being attracted to teaching; that teacher preparation programs need substantial improvement; that the professional working life of teachers is on the whole unacceptable; and that a serious shortage of teachers exists in key fields.

- Too many teachers are being drawn from the bottom quarter of graduating high school and college students.
- The teacher preparation curriculum is weighted heavily with courses in "educational methods" at the expense of courses in subjects to be taught. A survey of 1,350 institutions training teachers indicated that 41 percent of the time of elementary school teacher candidates is spent in education courses, which reduces the amount of time available for subject matter courses.
- The average salary after 12 years of teaching is only \$17,000 per year, and many teachers are required to supplement their income with part-time and summer employment. In addition, individual teachers have little influence in such critical professional decisions as, for example, textbook selection.
- Despite widespread publicity about an overpopulation of teachers, severe shortages of certain kinds of teachers exist: in the fields of mathematics, science, and foreign languages; and among specialists in education for gifted and talented, language minority, and handicapped students.
- The shortage of teachers in mathematics and science is particularly severe. A 1981 survey of 45 States revealed shortages of mathematics teachers in 43 States, critical shortages of earth sciences teachers in 33 States, and of physics teachers everywhere.
- Half of the newly employed mathematics, science, and English teachers are not qualified to teach these subjects; fewer than one-third of U. S. high schools offer physics taught by qualified teachers.

Recommendations

In light of the urgent need for improvement, both immediate and long term, this Commission has agreed on a set of recommendations that the American people can begin to act on now, that can be implemented over the next several years, and that promise lasting reform. The topics are familiar; there is little mystery about what we believe must be done. Many schools, districts, and States are already giving serious and constructive attention to these matters, even though their plans may differ from our recommendations in some details.

We wish to note that we refer to public, private, and parochial schools and colleges alike. All are valuable national resources. Examples of actions similar to those recommended below can be found in each of them.

We must emphasize that the variety of student aspirations, abilities, and preparation requires that appropriate content be available to satisfy diverse needs. Attention must be directed to both the nature of the content available and to the needs of particular learners. The most gifted students, for example, may need a curriculum enriched and accelerated beyond even the needs of other students of high ability. Similarly, educationally disadvantaged students may require special curriculum materials, smaller classes, or individual tutoring to help them master the material presented. Nevertheless, there remains a common expectation: We must demand the best effort and performance from all students, whether they are gifted or less able, affluent or disadvantaged, whether destined for college, the farm, or industry.

Our recommendations are based on the beliefs that everyone can learn, that everyone is born with an urge to learn which can be nurtured, that a solid high school education is within the reach of virtually all, and that life-long learning will equip people with the skills required for new careers and for citizenship.

Recommendation A: Content

We recommend that State and local high school graduation requirements be strengthened and that, at a minimum, all students seeking a diploma be required to lay the foundations in the Five New Basics by taking the following curriculum during their 4 years of high school: (a) 4 years of English; (b) 3 years of mathematics; (c) 3 years of science; (d) 3 years of social studies; and (e) one-half year of computer science. For the college-bound, 2 years of foreign language in high school are strongly recommended in addition to those taken earlier.

Whatever the student's educational or work objectives, knowledge of the New Basics is the foundation of success for the after-school years and, therefore, forms the core of the modern curriculum. A high level of shared education in these Basics, together with work in the fine and performing arts and foreign languages, constitutes the mind and spirit of our culture. The following Implementing Recommendations are intended as illustrative descriptions. They are included here to clarify what we mean by the essentials of a strong curriculum.

Implementing Recommendations

1. The teaching of *English* in high school should equip graduates to: (a) comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and use what they read; (b) write well-organized, effective papers; (c) listen effectively and discuss ideas intelligently; and (d) know our literary heritage and how it enhances imagination and ethical understanding, and how it relates to the customs, ideas, and values of today's life and culture.
2. The teaching of *mathematics* in high school should equip graduates to: (a) understand geometric and algebraic concepts; (b) understand elementary probability and statistics; (c) apply mathematics in everyday situations; and (d) estimate, approximate, measure, and test the accuracy of their calculations. In addition to the traditional sequence of studies available for college-bound students, new, equally demanding mathematics curricula need to be developed for those who do not plan to continue their formal education immediately.
3. The teaching of *science* in high school should provide graduates with an introduction to: (a) the concepts, laws, and processes of the physical and biological sciences; (b) the methods of scientific inquiry and reasoning; (c) the application of scientific knowledge to everyday life; and (d) the social and environmental implications of scientific and technological development. Science courses must be revised and updated for both the college-bound and those not intending to go to college. An example of such work is the American Chemical Society's "Chemistry in the Community" program.
4. The teaching of *social studies* in high school should be designed to: (a) enable students to fix their places and possibilities within the larger social and cultural structure; (b) understand the broad sweep of both ancient and contemporary ideas that have shaped our world; and (c) understand the fundamentals of how our economic system works and how our political system functions; and (d) grasp the difference between free and repressive societies. An understanding of each of these areas is requisite to the informed and committed exercise of citizenship in our free society.
5. The teaching of *computer science* in high school should equip graduates to: (a) understand the computer as an information, computation, and communication device; (b) use the computer in the study of the other Basics and for personal and work-related purposes; and (c) understand the world of computers, electronics, and related technologies.

In addition to the New Basics, other important curriculum matters must be addressed.

6. Achieving proficiency in a *foreign language* ordinarily requires from 4 to 6 years of study and should, therefore, be started in the elementary grades. We believe it is desirable that students achieve such proficiency because study of a foreign language introduces students to non-English-speaking cultures, heightens awareness and comprehension of one's native tongue, and serves the Nation's needs in commerce, diplomacy, defense, and education.
7. The high school curriculum should also provide students with programs requiring rigorous effort in subjects that advance students' personal, educational, and occupational goals, such as the fine and performing arts and vocational education. These areas complement the New Basics, and they should demand the same level of performance as the Basics.

8. The curriculum in the crucial eight grades leading to the high school years should be specifically designed to provide a sound base for study in those and later years in such areas as English language development and writing, computational and problem solving skills, science, social studies, foreign language, and the arts. These years should foster an enthusiasm for learning and the development of the individual's gifts and talents.
9. We encourage the continuation of efforts by groups such as the American Chemical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Modern Language Association, and the National Councils of Teachers of English and Teachers of Mathematics, to revise, update, improve, and make available new and more diverse curricular materials. We applaud the consortia of educators and scientific, industrial, and scholarly societies that cooperate to improve the school curriculum.

Recommendation B: Standards and Expectations

We recommend *that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations, for academic performance and student conduct, and that 4-year colleges and universities raise their requirements for admission. This will help students do their best educationally with challenging materials in an environment that supports learning and authentic accomplishment.*

Implementing Recommendations

1. Grades should be indicators of academic achievement so they can be relied on as evidence of a student's readiness for further study.
2. Four-year colleges and universities should raise their admissions requirements and advise all potential applicants of the standards for admission in terms of specific courses required, performance in these areas, and levels of achievement on standardized achievement tests in each of the five Basics and, where applicable, foreign languages.
3. Standardized tests of achievement (not to be confused with aptitude tests) should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another and particularly from high school to college or work. The purposes of these tests would be to: (a) certify the student's credentials; (b) identify the need for remedial intervention; and (c) identify the opportunity for advanced or accelerated work. The tests should be administered as part of a nationwide (but not Federal) system of State and local standardized tests. This system should include other diagnostic procedures that assist teachers and students to evaluate student progress.
4. Textbooks and other tools of learning and teaching should be upgraded and updated to assure more rigorous content. We call upon university scientists, scholars, and members of professional societies, in collaboration with master teachers, to help in this task, as they did in the post-Sputnik era. They should assist willing publishers in developing the products or publish their own alternatives where there are persistent inadequacies.
5. In considering textbooks for adoption, States and school districts should: (a) evaluate texts and other materials on their ability to present rigorous and challenging material clearly; and (b) require publishers to furnish evaluation data on the material's effectiveness.

6. Because no textbook in any subject can be geared to the needs of all students, funds should be made available to support text development in "thin-market" areas, such as those for disadvantaged students, the learning disabled, and the gifted and talented.
7. To assure quality, all publishers should furnish evidence of the quality and appropriateness of textbooks, based on results from field trials and credible evaluation. In view of the enormous numbers and varieties of texts available, more widespread consumer information services for purchasers are badly needed.
8. New instructional materials should reflect the most current applications of technology in appropriate curriculum areas, the best scholarship in each discipline, and research in learning and teaching.

Recommendation C: Time

We recommend *that significantly more time be devoted to learning the New Basics. This will require more effective use of the existing school day, a longer school day, or a lengthened school year.*

Implementing Recommendations

1. Students in high schools should be assigned far more homework than is now the case.
2. Instruction in effective study and work skills, which are essential if school and independent time is to be used efficiently, should be introduced in the early grades and continued throughout the student's schooling.
3. School districts and State legislatures should strongly consider 7-hour school days, as well as a 200- to 220-day school year.
4. The time available for learning should be expanded through better classroom management and organization of the school day. If necessary, additional time should be found to meet the special needs of slow learners, the gifted, and others who need more instructional diversity than can be accommodated during a conventional school day or school year.
5. The burden on teachers for maintaining discipline should be reduced through the development of firm and fair codes of student conduct that are enforced consistently, and by considering alternative classrooms, programs, and schools to meet the needs of continually disruptive students.
6. Attendance policies with clear incentives and sanctions should be used to reduce the amount of time lost through student absenteeism and tardiness.
7. Administrative burdens on the teacher and related intrusions into the school day should be reduced to add time for teaching and learning.
8. Placement and grouping of students, as well as promotion and graduation policies, should be guided by the academic progress of students and their instructional needs, rather than by rigid adherence to age.

Recommendation D: Teaching

This recommendation *consists of seven parts. Each is intended to improve the preparation of teachers or to make teaching a more rewarding and respected profession. Each of the seven stands on its own and should not be considered solely as an implementing recommendation.*

1. Persons preparing to teach should be required to meet high educational standards, to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching, and to demonstrate competence in an academic discipline. Colleges and universities offering teacher preparation programs should be judged by how well their graduates meet these criteria.
2. Salaries for the teaching profession should be increased and should be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based. Salary, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions should be tied to an effective evaluation system that includes peer review so that superior teachers can be rewarded, average ones encouraged, and poor ones either improved or terminated.
3. School boards should adopt an 11-month contract for teachers. This would ensure time for curriculum and professional development, programs for students with special needs, and a more adequate level of teacher compensation.
4. School boards, administrators, and teachers should cooperate to develop career ladders for teachers that distinguish among the beginning instructor, the experienced teacher, and the master teacher.
5. Substantial nonschool personnel resources should be employed to help solve the immediate problem of the shortage of mathematics and science teachers. Qualified individuals, including recent graduates with mathematics and science degrees, graduate students, and industrial and retired scientists could, with appropriate preparation, immediately begin teaching in these fields. A number of our leading science centers have the capacity to begin educating and retraining teachers immediately. Other areas of critical teacher need, such as English, must also be addressed.
6. Incentives, such as grants and loans, should be made available to attract outstanding students to the teaching profession, particularly in those areas of critical shortage.
7. Master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in supervising teachers during their probationary years.

Recommendation E: Leadership and Fiscal Support

We recommend *that citizens across the Nation hold educators and elected officials responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve these reforms, and that citizens provide the fiscal support and stability required to bring about the reforms we propose.*

Implementing Recommendations

1. Principals and superintendents must play a crucial leadership role in developing school and community support for the reforms we propose, and school boards must provide them with the professional development and other support required to carry out their leadership role effectively. The Commission stresses the distinction between leadership skills involving persuasion, setting goals and developing community consensus behind them, and managerial and supervisory skills. Although the latter are necessary, we

believe that school boards must consciously develop leadership skills at the school and district levels if the reforms we propose are to be achieved.

2. State and local officials, including school board members, governors, and legislators, have *the primary responsibility* for financing and governing the schools, and should incorporate the reforms we propose in their educational policies and fiscal planning.
3. The Federal Government, in cooperation with States and localities, should help meet the needs of key groups of students such as the gifted and talented, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, minority and language minority students, and the handicapped. In combination these groups include both national resources and the Nation's youth who are most at risk.
4. In addition, we believe the Federal Government's role includes several functions of national consequence that States and localities alone are unlikely to be able to meet: protecting constitutional and civil rights for students and school personnel; collecting data, statistics, and information about education generally; supporting curriculum improvement and research on teaching, learning, and the management of schools; supporting teacher training in areas of critical shortage or key national needs; and providing student financial assistance and research and graduate training. We believe the assistance of the Federal Government should be provided with a minimum of administrative burden and intrusiveness.
5. The Federal Government has *the primary responsibility* to identify the national interest in education. It should also help fund and support efforts to protect and promote that interest. It must provide the national leadership to ensure that the Nation's public and private resources are marshaled to address the issues discussed in this report.
6. This Commission calls upon educators, parents, and public officials at all levels to assist in bringing about the educational reform proposed in this report. We also call upon citizens to provide the financial support necessary to accomplish these purposes. Excellence costs. But in the long run mediocrity costs far more.

America Can Do It

Despite the obstacles and difficulties that inhibit the pursuit of superior educational attainment, we are confident, with history as our guide, that we can meet our goal. The American educational system has responded to previous challenges with remarkable success. In the 19th century our land-grant colleges and universities provided the research and training that developed our Nation's natural resources and the rich agricultural bounty of the American farm. From the late 1800s through mid-20th century, American schools provided the educated workforce needed to seal the success of the Industrial Revolution and to provide the margin of victory in two world wars. In the early part of this century and continuing to this very day, our schools have absorbed vast waves of immigrants and educated them and their children to productive citizenship. Similarly, the Nation's Black colleges have provided opportunity and undergraduate education to the vast majority of college-educated Black Americans.

More recently, our institutions of higher education have provided the scientists and skilled technicians who helped us transcend the boundaries of our planet. In the last 30 years, the schools have been a major vehicle for expanded social opportunity, and now graduate 75 percent of our young people from high school. Indeed, the proportion of Americans of college age enrolled in higher education is nearly twice that of Japan and far exceeds other nations such as

France, West Germany, and the Soviet Union. Moreover, when international comparisons were last made a decade ago, the top 9 percent of American students compared favorably in achievement with their peers in other countries.

In addition, many large urban areas in recent years report that average student achievement in elementary schools is improving. More and more schools are also offering advanced placement programs and programs for gifted and talented students, and more and more students are enrolling in them.

We are the inheritors of a past that gives us every reason to believe that we will succeed.

A Word to Parents and Students

The task of assuring the success of our recommendations does not fall to the schools and colleges alone. Obviously, faculty members and administrators, along with policymakers and the mass media, will play a crucial role in the reform of the educational system. But even more important is the role of parents and students, and to them we speak directly.

To Parents

You know that you cannot confidently launch your children into today's world unless they are of strong character and well-educated in the use of language, science, and mathematics. They must possess a deep respect for intelligence, achievement, and learning, and the skills needed to use them; for setting goals; and for disciplined work. That respect must be accompanied by an intolerance for the shoddy and second-rate masquerading as "good enough."

You have the right to demand for your children the best our schools and colleges can provide. Your vigilance and your refusal to be satisfied with less than the best are the imperative first step. But your right to a proper education for your children carries a double responsibility. As surely as you are your child's first and most influential teacher, your child's ideas about education and its significance begin with you. You must be a *living* example of what you expect your children to honor and to emulate. Moreover, you bear a responsibility to participate actively in your child's education. You should encourage more diligent study and discourage satisfaction with mediocrity and the attitude that says "let it slide"; monitor your child's study; encourage good study habits; encourage your child to take more demanding rather than less demanding courses; nurture your child's curiosity, creativity, and confidence; and be an active participant in the work of the schools. Above all, exhibit a commitment to continued learning in your own life. Finally, help your children understand that excellence in education cannot be achieved without intellectual and moral integrity coupled with hard work and commitment. Children will look to their parents and teachers as models of such virtues.

To Students

You forfeit your chance for life at its fullest when you withhold your best effort in learning. When you give only the minimum to learning, you receive only the minimum in return. Even with your parents' best example and your teachers' best efforts, in the end it is *your* work that determines how much and how well you learn. When you work to your full capacity, you can

hope to attain the knowledge and skills that will enable you to create your future and control your destiny. If you do not, you will have your future thrust upon you by others. Take hold of your life, apply your gifts and talents, work with dedication and self-discipline. Have high expectations for yourself and convert every challenge into an opportunity.

A Final Word

This is not the first or only commission on education, and some of our findings are surely not new, but old business that now at last must be done. For no one can doubt that the United States is under challenge from many quarters.

Children born today can expect to graduate from high school in the year 2000. We dedicate our report not only to these children, but also to those now in school and others to come. We firmly believe that a movement of America's schools in the direction called for by our recommendations will prepare these children for far more effective lives in a far stronger America.

Our final word, perhaps better characterized as a plea, is that all segments of our population give attention to the implementation of our recommendations. Our present plight did not appear overnight, and the responsibility for our current situation is widespread. Reform of our educational system will take time and unwavering commitment. It will require equally widespread, energetic, and dedicated action. For example, we call upon the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine, Science Service, National Science Foundation, Social Science Research Council, American Council of Learned Societies, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, and other scholarly, scientific, and learned societies for their help in this effort. Help should come from students themselves; from parents, teachers, and school boards; from colleges and universities; from local, State, and Federal officials; from teachers' and administrators' organizations; from industrial and labor councils; and from other groups with interest in and responsibility for educational reform.

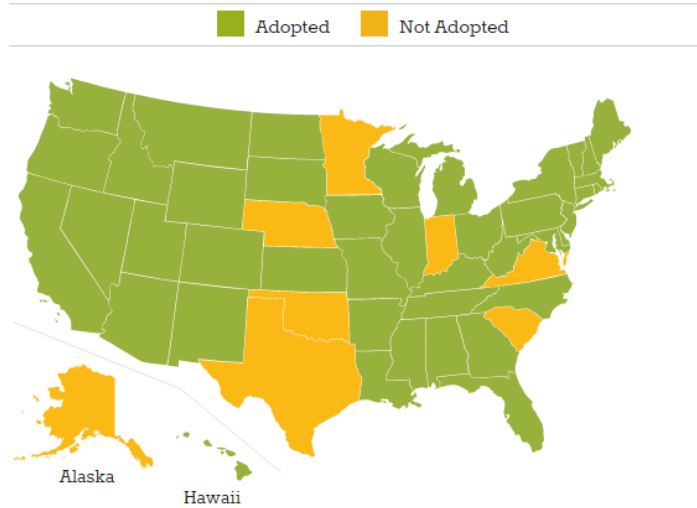
It is their America, and the America of all of us, that is at risk; it is to each of us that this imperative is addressed. It is by our willingness to take up the challenge, and our resolve to see it through, that America's place in the world will be either secured or forfeited. Americans have succeeded before and so we shall again.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2016

Appendix C – Adoption of Common Core Standards by State

Standards in Your State

Forty-two states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have adopted the Common Core State Standards. The map below provides information about the process each state and territory followed to adopt their new academic standards. In addition, links are provided to state and territory department of education websites that provide information about how the standards are being implemented, plans for aligned assessments, supports for teachers, and plans to help all students succeed.



Non – Common Core States and Territories:

Alaska

Indiana

Minnesota

Nebraska

Oklahoma

South Carolina

Texas

Virginia

Puerto Rico

NOTE: These states adopted their own version of the Common Core Standards. All other states implemented the Common Core from 2010 to 2011.

 District of Columbia	 Puerto Rico	 Guam
 American Samoan Islands	 US Virgin Islands	 Northern Mariana Islands
 Department of Defense Education Activity		

* Full implementation is defined as the school year the state expects teachers in grades K-12 in English language arts and mathematics to incorporate the standards into classroom instruction.

Source: Achieve, "Closing the Expectations Gap 2013 Annual Report on the Alignment of State K-12 Policies and Practice with the Demands of College and Careers."

Source: <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>

Appendix D – Bill Gates’ Speech at A Forum on Education in America

A Forum on Education in America

November 11, 2008, Seattle, Washington

prepared remarks by Bill Gates, co-chair and trustee

Source: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Speeches/2008/11/Bill-Gates-Forum-on-Education-in-America>

Good morning. Big advances only come when committed people study the same problems and build on each other’s work. It accelerates discovery, and I’m optimistic about what all of us can accomplish together.

Melinda and I believe that providing every child with a good education is the only path to equality in America. A good education means completing a postsecondary degree. And yet when we began our work eight years ago, the level of high school dropouts made even starting a postsecondary degree impossible for millions of students.

We were determined to find ways to work with our partners to turn around rising dropout rates, and increase the number of high school students who graduated from high school ready to succeed in college. We hoped that if we could build a model of a high-achieving school, it would be picked up by other schools. So we focused on 8 percent of schools, hoping that the lessons from our work in the 8 percent would scale to the 92 percent.

As Melinda said, we are determined to follow the evidence. So let me describe what we’ve found, what we make of it, and what we’re going to do about it.

There were some highly encouraging results—but I’ll start with the disappointments. In the first four years of our work with new, small schools, most of the schools had achievement scores below district averages on reading and math assessments. In one set of schools we supported, graduation rates were no better than the statewide average, and reading and math scores were consistently below the average. The percentage of students attending college the year after graduating high school was up only 2.5 percentage points after five years. Simply breaking up existing schools into smaller units often did not generate the gains we were hoping for.

On a more positive note, we saw encouraging successes in some of the new, small schools we supported, including some in New York City. Their graduation rates were nearly 40 percentage points higher than the rates in the schools they replaced. In 2006, the small schools' graduation rates exceeded those of comparable schools in the district by 18 percentage points. Chancellor Klein is here this morning, and I want to thank him and Mayor Bloomberg for their leadership.

There were a number of small school replications that were also encouraging: KIPP, High Tech High, Green Dot in Los Angeles, Hidalgo Early College High School in the Rio Grande Valley, YES College Preparatory Schools in Houston, Aspire High Schools in California, the Noble Street network in Chicago, IDEA Public Schools in Texas. I’ll highlight just one of these: YES College Prep.

YES has done an impressive job with demographics that are the same as the lowest-performing public schools in Houston. Ninety-five percent of the students are African-American or Hispanic. Eighty-eight percent will be the first in their families to go to college. Eighty percent are economically disadvantaged.

For the eighth year in a row, 100 percent of their graduates were accepted into four-year colleges, including some of the top universities in the country. Ninety-one percent of YES alumni have either graduated from or are still enrolled in a four-year college.

Those are the top-line results of our work. They have shown us that all kids can succeed. But since our goal was not only to turn around schools, but to find good models and take them to scale, I have to add: we did not get the results we were seeking in scaling. We wanted to reach all schools indirectly, by showing clear gains and inspiring other schools and districts to replicate those models. Largely, this has not happened.

At our foundation, we believe that success ultimately means that at least 80 percent of low-income and minority students graduate from high school college-ready. According to our data, the number of low income and minority students graduating college ready today is 22 percent, and that figure is increasing far too slowly. It's unacceptable. We need to do better.

So let me describe what we make of the evidence, and what we plan to do next.

The disappointing results showed how hard it can be to convert large, low-performing high schools into smaller, more autonomous schools. To be successful, a redesign requires changing the roles and responsibilities of adults, and changes to the school's culture. In some districts, we got tacit agreement to move forward, but then the schools weren't willing to do the hard things—like removing ineffective staff or significantly increasing the rigor of the curriculum.

In New York City, many schools reorganized the school day to get students more time with math and reading, and they reduced the size of the school to improve relationships between students and teachers. Results showed that smaller, more personal learning environments and strong, caring bonds between students and adults can increase graduation rates dramatically. We see these structural changes as necessary, but not sufficient.

We saw that there is a big difference between graduating from high school and being ready for college. In New York City, less than 40 percent of the class of 2007 met the City University of New York's standard for college readiness on the Regent exams. And the percentage of students from small schools was no better than the rest of the city.

It's clear that you can't dramatically increase college readiness by changing only the size and structure of a school. The schools that made dramatic gains in achievement did the changes in design and also emphasized changes inside the classroom.

For example, YES and other models include a longer school day and a mandatory Saturday school and a summer school program, which is in line with some of the changes in the New York

schools. But YES also sets academic standards that line up with the expectations of top universities.

In general, the places that demonstrated the strongest results tended to do many proven reforms well, all at once: they would create smaller schools, a longer day, better relationships—but they would also establish college-ready standards aligned with a rigorous curriculum, with the instructional tools to support it, effective teachers to teach it, and data systems to track the progress.

These factors distinguished the schools with the biggest gains in student achievement. Interestingly, these are also limiting factors in taking these gains to scale. A model that depends on great teaching can't be replicated by schools that can't attract and develop great teachers. A school that has great instructional tools cannot share them with schools that don't use the rigorous curriculum those tools are based on.

We will continue the part of our work that is dedicated to improving the structure of schools, because it can help promote achievement.

But the defining feature of a great education is what happens in the classroom. Everything starts from that and must be built around it. So we're going to sharpen our focus on effective teaching—in particular supporting new standards, curriculum, instructional tools, and data that help teachers—because these changes trigger the biggest gains, they are hardest to scale, and that is what's holding us back.

We're not the first people to focus on effective teaching to improve education. We're not even the first people in this room. A growing body of evidence tells us that teacher effectiveness is the single most important factor in student achievement. If you take two classrooms from the same school, both starting out at the 50th percentile, and assign one to a teacher in the top quartile and another to a teacher in the bottom quartile, there will be a 10 percentile difference in achievement at the end of the year.

In fact, research shows that there is only half as much variation in student achievement *between* schools as there is *across* classrooms in the same school. We've known about these huge differences in student achievement in different classrooms for at least 30 years. Unfortunately, it seems that the field doesn't have a clear view on the characteristics of great teaching. Is it using one curriculum over another? Is it extra time after school? We don't really know. But that's what we have to find out if we're going to not only recognize great teachers, but also take average teachers and help them become great teachers. I'm personally very intrigued by this question, and over the next few years I want to get deeply engaged in understanding this better.

The first step in identifying effective teaching has to be setting fewer, clearer, higher standards that are aligned with the goal of graduating students from high school college-ready. You can't compare teachers if they're not pursuing a common standard. I believe strongly in national standards. Countries that excel in math, for example, have a far more focused, common curriculum than the United States does.

Every student is capable of a college-ready curriculum; that has to be the standard everywhere. On our trip to Texas that Melinda mentioned, she and I spoke to a group of teachers who were working at KIPP Academy schools. When we asked them why they chose KIPP schools over public schools, one Latina teacher said: “I wanted to teach at a school where everyone believes you can go to college, even when you look like me.”

That ought to be every school in America.

Our foundation will keep working with states and districts to develop a core set of priority standards that students need to succeed in higher education, and getting states and districts to sign on. Members of the Common State Standards Coalition have built momentum on this issue—we now have governors and state education chiefs leading the effort. So we’re optimistic about this.

As states begin to embrace common standards, technology will help us create the next-generation models of teaching and learning. With interactivity, we can provide software to qualify a student or to bring a subject to life. We need to have the best lectures available online and for free on DVDs. Microsoft did this in India with math courses and saw that it was beneficial in a number of ways. They held contests to pick the most effective teachers from their lectures on the DVDs. Then they distributed the DVDs. Some students watched the lectures. In other cases, teachers watched outside of class to improve their teaching, or they would assign the lectures to kids who were ahead or behind.

And we’re not doing enough to provide data for teachers. Amazon.com knows every book you’ve ever bought from them. They can recommend five more based on what you like. But we have no such tool set for teachers. On the first day of school, a ninth-grade teacher has absolutely no idea which of her students can calculate the area of a circle or identify the elements of a short story. Teachers should know this.

The education sector desperately needs an infrastructure for creating better instructional tools—always with measurement systems in place so we have evidence that the new way works better than the old way. Without evidence, innovation is just another word for “fad.”

We need to be able to determine which curricula, which software and other instructional aides are most effective in helping teachers teach and students learn.

Doctors aren’t left alone in their offices to try to design and test new medicines. They’re supported by a huge medical research industry. Teachers need the same kind of support. We will help build the infrastructure for testing and evaluating the tools developed by others.

Teaching is a hard profession. As we heard in the video from Texas, a lot of great teachers leave school far sooner than they want to because they’re exhausted. Offering this kind of help could not only improve student performance; it could help make good teachers into great teachers, and help keep great teachers in the classroom longer.

We will also be helping states and districts build data systems that provide teachers timely feedback about student learning. One of the great benefits of No Child Left Behind, whatever its flaws, is that it requires states to track data about the achievement gap. That's crucial information for addressing inequity, and we need to build on it.

A principal should be able to see at a glance how each student in a school is doing, and ask about those who are falling behind. We have seen people oppose this kind of data system on behalf of privacy; I don't think that argument holds. I'm optimistic that very advanced data systems can be built that provide indispensable information on student progress while preserving legitimate privacy concerns.

Data systems, of course, will tell us which teachers are getting the biggest achievement gains every year. If we're going to retain them, we're going to have to reward them. It's astonishing to me that you could have a system that doesn't allow you to pay more for strong performance, or for teaching in a particular school. That is almost like saying "Teacher performance doesn't matter"...and that's basically saying: "*Students* don't matter."

If we don't pay great teachers more, we won't develop and keep more great teachers. This isn't computer science; it's common sense.

There are two extreme sides in this debate. According to the caricature, one side just wants to turn teachers into commissioned salesmen, so their whole salary is based on how much the scores improve. The other caricature says that teachers don't want to be held accountable, so they will reject any system that ties pay to performance. In truth, designing an appropriate incentive system is difficult, but possible.

We believe in incentive systems, but we understand the concern that without the right design, they could seem arbitrary or incent the wrong things. They need to be transparent, they need to make sense, and teachers themselves need to see the benefits of the system and embrace them.

That's why we're going to set up partnerships in three to five areas to design a system that offers the training and tools that help every teacher improve; recruits, rewards, and retains effective teachers; and gives them incentives to work in the schools where they're needed most. Then we will measure whether it leads to significant improvements in student achievement.

We're going to choose districts that have strong leadership, that have a base level of data systems in place, and that have demonstrated support from teachers and the local teachers union. If the teachers don't embrace it, it will fail.

We're excited by certain models around the country—including Green Dot schools in Los Angeles and the schools in Prince George's County, Maryland. We're also encouraged by the model in Denver, where the teachers union and district administrators designed and adopted a system based on performance incentives. Teachers could choose their old pay formula, or join a new system that gives raises and bonuses for meeting test score targets and teaching high-need subjects, or working in high-need schools. The district funded the additional pay from a \$25

million annual property tax levy that was approved by voters—but the only way the teachers could draw down the salary is if they enrolled in the new system.

It showed that taxpayers are willing to pay more to support their local schools—if the extra money is tied to higher achievement.

Money is tight. We need to spend it wisely. We're now spending \$8 billion a year for teachers with master's degrees, even though the evidence suggests that master's degrees do not improve student achievement. We're spending billions on a seniority system, even though the evidence says that seniority, after the first five years, may not improve student achievement. We've spent billions to reduce class size, even though there is no strong evidence that spending money to reduce class size in high school is the most impactful way to improve student performance.

And the last thing we can afford—whether the economy is good or bad—is to pay teachers who can't do the job. As President-elect Obama and others have pointed out: We need to give all teachers the benefit of clear standards, sound curriculum, good training, and top instructional tools. But if their students *still* keep falling behind, they're in the wrong line of work, and they need to find another job.

Anyone who opposes dramatic change in our schools has to make an impossible case. Either they have to deny that our schools are failing, or they have to argue that the kids are to blame. Either view is wrong. If you believe every child can learn—and the evidence strongly supports this—then if the students don't learn, the school must change. It won't be easy, but it's essential.

I am optimistic. We have better technology than we've ever had to help us identify great teachers, support their work, and spread their methods. We have ingenious ways to tap a kid's desire to learn. We have political momentum that is bringing teachers and districts together. And we're going to have a dynamic new president who's committed to education. The country is ready for change. Let's use the moment to accelerate the change in our schools.

Thank you.

Appendix E – Bill Gates’ Speech at the Teaching and Learning Conference

Bill Gates speech on education Reform at the Teaching and Learning Conference, March 4, 2014 in Washington, D.C.

Source: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Speeches/2014/03/Bill-Gates-Teaching-and-Learning-Conference>

Public education is the single greatest instrument for equal opportunity in America. That is why Melinda and I focus on public schools. And that is why we support a change that can trigger big gains for our students: the Common Core State Standards.

After studying them, talking to teachers about them, and seeing students learn from them, we are convinced that the new standards are a platform for innovation. They will give teachers the freedom you need to be creative, the tools you need to be effective, the feedback you need to keep improving – and the rigor that our students need to become great learners.

As you know, the standards are benchmarks in math and English for what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. They emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving, and they are now being implemented in 45 states and here in the District of Columbia.

They’re also inspiring heated debate. Some of the debate comes from people who want more time and support for teachers to implement the standards. Some of the debate comes from people who want to stop the standards, which would send us back to what we had before.

As someone who passionately supports the new standards, I want to offer my views today about what they are, why we need them, and what should be done to help teachers master them. I feel honored to be making these remarks to teachers who have done so much to advance the standards of the teaching profession. There are many voices in this debate, but none are more important or more trusted than yours.

Last month, we had more than a dozen teachers from across the country come talk to our team at the Foundation so we could hear more about what they’re facing as they switch over to the Common Core.

One teacher told a story about the old standards that for her captured the need for the Common Core. She said: “We have kids who fail, and it’s not [just] the kids who think they’re going to fail.” Then she talked of a student of hers she called a “success story kid.” She said “I told [him he] was ready. He trusted me, and went to college and dropped out because he *wasn’t* ready.” Then she added: “What we were doing before was not always working, even when we thought it was.... that is why we’re asking more.”

Millions of students have suffered through the same story. From kindergarten through high school, they meet the standards we ask of them, but we don’t ask enough. Then after years of not asking enough, we suddenly ask way too much – and they learn too late that their high school diploma didn’t prepare them for college. They have to pay out of their own pockets to take remedial courses to learn what we should have already taught them. And most of them never make it through. They drop out. And they never did anything wrong.

This is a defining challenge for our schools today. There is a huge gap between what it takes to graduate from high school and what it takes to be ready for college or work. This gap is why the nation's governors joined together in 2009 to call on teachers and education experts to design new standards. The standards they developed are a direct response to our biggest challenge, and a striking advance over what we had before.

The Features of the Common Core

First, the new standards are set high to match the needs of students who want to go to college or get a job that leads to a career. If we teach to these standards, we will finally make good on the covenant between schools and students: "If you learn what we teach, you will be ready to succeed at the next stage."

Second, the standards are clear and focused. In math, the common core focuses on the essential concepts that are crucial to mastering the *next* year's concepts -- from multiplying and dividing -- to working with fractions -- to using ratios and proportions. The common core is not a list of skills; it's a staircase. Each standard is a step toward the higher skills that will help students solve complex problems in the classroom and beyond.

In English Language Arts, research has shown that the single most important predictor of student success in college and career is the ability to read complex text. The approach of the common core to reading is simple and effective. The students should read text -- understand it, explain it, apply it, analyze it, draw inferences from it, and cite evidence from it -- at ever higher levels of complexity -- with ever greater independence. When students master this, they open the door to everything.

Third, the standards are consistent from state to state. Some people who see the value of higher standards don't see the need for *shared* standards. Why can't we have 50 separate sets of standards, so long as they're higher? The answer is: Inconsistent standards punish students. When students want to go to college, they take the ACT or the SAT. When they get into college, they may take placement tests. Students who haven't been taught what's on these tests are at a huge disadvantage. Under the old standards, if you were from Kentucky, you didn't have to know the quadratic formula, but your neighbors in Tennessee did. If you were from Maryland, you didn't have to learn trigonometry, but your neighbors in Virginia did. If you didn't learn an area of math that other students did, you might find out about it for the first time on a test that helps determine your future. That's blatantly unfair to millions of students.

Advancing the Profession of Teaching

There is another crucial reason for making standards consistent from state to state: Clear, consistent standards will advance the teaching profession. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards demonstrates even in its *title* the essential link between *standards* and a *profession*.

Consistent Standards: A Platform for Innovation.

But let's be open about this. When most of us hear that the government is going to set a new standard, the first thing we think is – 'this is going to get in my way.' Believe me; I understand this reaction. But it's important to explain to people that this is different – that the common core standards don't *limit* freedom; they *promote* freedom.

As you know, a standard means, in one sense, a 'level of performance'. But there is another meaning that is relevant here – a standard also means 'a common definition that everyone understands and accepts'.

These standards are so ubiquitous in society that we often don't see them, but they are crucial to innovation. A standard electrical outlet allows technological innovations to be used in every home. A standard computer language (TCP/IP) allows billions of people to share information on the internet. A standard shipping container lets us move goods from ships to trains to trucks. Standard units allow scientists to share data. Without consistent standards, we wouldn't be able to share information or spread innovation.

When there are 50 different interpretations of what students need to know, it's harder to make progress toward big goals because it's hard to *agree* on the goals. On the other hand, when everyone embraces consistent standards, you can define goals, test methods, and see what's effective. That's why consistent standards are so important to teaching: they provide a shared platform that allows teachers to communicate, cooperate, innovate, learn from each other and keep pushing to get better.

I've discussed this with people who say – how can standards be a platform for innovation if everyone has to teach the same standards? They're confusing standards and curriculum. They're not the same. Standards say only what your students need to learn; they don't tell you how to teach it.

Here's an illustration. This is a common core standard for high school geometry:
"Prove theorems about lines and angles."

That's it. That's not curriculum; it's a standard. No one can know geometry without learning it. No one can make a rational case for excluding it. And it doesn't matter in the slightest how you teach it as long as the students learn it.

There's a standard for eighth grade literature that is basically this:

First read a book, then watch the movie, then analyze and evaluate the differences.

That is a standard. It doesn't tell anyone what to think; it doesn't tell you what to read; it doesn't tell you how to teach. It just describes the kind of thinking the students need to be able to do.

That's how clear and consistent standards drive innovation. They set teachers free to try any method, compare their results, and share the ones that work best. This opens the door to insightful teacher feedback that can be tied to great professional development and customized for each teacher. Teachers can build their strengths by watching videos of their colleagues in the classroom—or studying their lesson plans.

Consistent standards give teachers access to the most valuable resource possible: each other. Teaching is suddenly not an isolated pursuit, but a shared enterprise. It lets all teachers learn from each other, and that's what drives a profession forward.

Consistent Standards: Innovation in Teaching Tools

Consistent standards will also lead to tools that help teachers reach each student. Until now, different standards in every state made it hard for innovators to design tools that a lot of teachers could use, so teachers haven't enjoyed the technology advances that benefit other professionals. Consistent standards can change that.

Imagine you're teaching the standard on analyzing the differences between a book and a film. How can you engage every student at the highest level? What if someone developed software that allowed students to choose the book and film that interest them most? That would personalize the experience and help engage each student.

Or imagine you're teaching students to "prove theorems about lines and angles." You could point them to an on-line program that demonstrates how to do the proofs and then tests their knowledge. If the student doesn't get it, the software can review the concepts, taking her as far back as she needs to go to start getting it right. Meanwhile, teachers no longer have to spend class time delivering content; they are now free to do the things that software can't do – work with students one-on-one or in small groups, motivating them and boosting their confidence.

We're just at the start of this. There is a lot of innovation happening on-line that is free and interactive. It can show students where they stand and share that information with the teacher. I think you deserve this kind of support. Doctors don't sit alone in their offices trying to design new tools for healing. Athletes don't stay late at the stadium trying to design themselves a lighter shoe. They're supported by huge industries that are designing new tools to give them an edge. You should benefit from innovation at least as much as they do. To get innovation that advances quickly and works for all 50 states, we need the consistent standards of the common core.

Implementation

I am very enthusiastic about the Common Core, but I know that implementation has been bumpy in places. Teachers have talked to us about the challenges. One teacher said: "When I looked at the standards and started understanding them, I was excited about the opportunities to ... develop my own materials on it. I loved that. But a lot of teachers just don't have that perspective right now."

Another teacher was having a harder time. He said: "Everybody in my school is complaining about the lack of curriculum ... now we have to jump all over the place and find extra materials to make things deeper and richer."

Progress is faster in some places than others, and the states that are doing implementation well are following a few key principles.

- They involve teachers in planning.
- They listen to teachers and make changes based on their feedback.
- They help teachers get experience with the new standards.
- They create ways for teachers to share their practices.
- And they give teachers and students time to adjust to the new standards before they face consequences for not meeting them.

No one who supports the common core wants to raise the standards just to see students fail. We all want to see them succeed. So as we raise the standards, we have to make sure that teachers get what they need to teach them well.

Fortunately, teachers across the country are mobilizing to support each other. Colorado educators have created more than 600 curriculum samples based on the standards. The Georgia State Department of Education has a library of more than a 1,000 videos of common core lessons. The NEA master teacher initiative has brought together 95 teachers to develop a year's worth of common core-aligned lessons.

These are all encouraging signs that teachers will get the new materials and support they need.

The Confusion

There is one thing that worries me, though. It's the false claims that some people keep making about the standards.

It's a federal takeover. It's a national curriculum. It's the end of innovation.

None of this is true, and the controversy it stirs up takes the focus away from helping teachers. When people are yelling about problems that aren't there, they make it harder to solve the challenges that *are* there.

Even if it will never persuade some people, it's important to repeat the facts. The states designed the standards, not the federal government. The standards are goals, not methods. They say what should be learned, not how it must be taught.

We don't have time to answer every false tweet and post. The best response to these claims is the voice of an experienced teacher talking to a concerned parent.

The teachers we heard from had a special respect for the parents who came in and complained, because it proved how much they wanted their kids to be successful. Some parents would come in and say: "You're experimenting on my kid." And the teachers' reaction was: "We're not experimenting on your kid. We're trying to help your kid be a better learner... and get into college and not live in your basement."

That's a goal that unites a lot of parents.

The transition to the new standards is hard – but it has to be. We're trying to get America's kids ready for life in a global knowledge-based economy. As one teacher put it: "The kids that are leaving my room – they're not all going to be trying to get a job in the town where I teach."

The standards shouldn't be a mark of where students came from, but a key to wherever they want to go.

I hope each one of you can be involved in this discussion and bring it back to what's real. I hope you can find time to sit down with parents in your community and tell them what the standards really are.

The Common Core isn't just another policy debate; it's a pivotal issue for the future. It will help prepare all our students for college and career – and that's the best idea our country has for giving every child an equal chance. Thank you.

Appendix F – The Gates Foundation Education Funding Allocation for the Common Core Standards

The top recipients of funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to implement and support the Common Core Standards.

Source: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/09/bill-melinda-gates-foundation-common-core>

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Achievement First Inc.	\$837,355	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
Albuquerque Public Schools	\$500,000	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Alliance for Excellent Education, Inc.	\$551,336	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2009 and earlier	College-Ready
American Agora Foundation Inc	\$100,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
American Enterprise Institute For Public Policy Research	\$1,068,788	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2012	Global Policy & Advocacy
American Federation Of Teachers Educational Foundation	\$4,400,000	Unions	2012	College-Ready
American Federation Of Teachers Educational Foundation	\$1,000,000	Unions	2011	College-Ready
Americas Promise-The Alliance For Youth	\$500,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	College-Ready
Americas Promise-The Alliance For Youth	\$100,001	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Arkansas Public School Resource Center Inc	\$200,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Aspire Public Schools	\$249,855	States/schools	2013	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	\$3,024,695	Nonprofit	2011	College-Ready
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	\$244,733	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Atlanta Public Schools	\$500,000	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Baton Rouge Area Foundation	\$500,000	nonprofit	2012	College-Ready
Battelle For Kids	\$249,808	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Bellwether Education Partners, Inc.	\$1,981,978	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Benchmark Education Company LLC	\$25,000	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
BetterLesson, Inc.	\$3,527,240	Private companies	2012	College-Ready
Californians Dedicated to Education Foundation	\$500,000	Nonprofit	2014	College-Ready
Center for American Progress	\$550,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Center for Applied Linguistics	\$249,396	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Center for Curriculum Redesign Inc.	\$198,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2012	College-Ready
Center for Teaching Quality, Inc.	\$395,836	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2010	College-Ready
Center for Teaching Quality, Inc.	\$249,471	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Charter Fund Inc dba Charter School Growth Fund	\$4,000,000	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
Cleveland Metropolitan School District	\$497,752	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Colorado Legacy Foundation	\$9,707,210	Nonprofit	2011	College-Ready
Colorado Legacy Foundation	\$1,748,337	States/schools	2012	College-Ready
Committee for Economic Development	\$865,593	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	Global Policy & Advocacy
Common Core Inc.	\$550,844	Nonprofit	2009 and earlier	College-Ready
Common Ground Software Inc.	\$500,000	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
ConnectEDU, Inc.	\$499,375	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
Council for a Strong America	\$1,700,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	Global Policy & Advocacy
Council of Chief State School Officers	\$9,388,911	CCSSO/NGA	2011	College-Ready
Council of Chief State School Officers	\$4,000,000	CCSSO/NGA	2013	College-Ready
Council of Chief State School Officers	\$1,958,500	CCSSO/NGA	2013	College-Ready
Council of Chief State School Officers	\$1,100,000	CCSSO/NGA	2012	College-Ready
Council of Chief State School Officers	\$799,825	CCSSO/NGA	2013	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Council of State Governments	\$399,953	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2010	College-Ready
Council of State Governments	\$369,623	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	College-Ready
Council Of The Great City Schools	\$5,511,184	States/schools	2011	College-Ready
Council Of The Great City Schools	\$2,000,000	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
Council Of The Great City Schools	\$100,000	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Creative Commons Corporation	\$1,099,687	Nonprofit	2011	College-Ready
Cristo Rey Network	\$556,006	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Delaware Department of Education	\$400,000	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
DePaul University	\$248,343	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
Education Commission of the States	\$799,221	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2010	College-Ready
Education Development Center, Inc.	\$211,795	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, Inc.	\$250,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc.	\$231,846	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Filament Games, LLC	\$25,000	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
Forsyth County Schools	\$151,200	States/schools	2010	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Foundation for Excellence in Education Inc.	\$2,000,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Fund for Public Schools Inc	\$1,815,810	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2012	College-Ready
Georgia Department of Education	\$1,980,892	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Harvard University	\$557,168	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
Hillsborough County Council of PTA/PTSA's	\$25,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	College-Ready
iCivics, Inc.	\$500,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Illustrative Mathematics	\$3,416,901	Nonprofit	2012	College-Ready
James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy Foundation, Inc.	\$5,549,352	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2009 and earlier	College-Ready
James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy Foundation, Inc.	\$1,749,070	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy Foundation, Inc.	\$500,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
JUMP Math	\$698,587	Nonprofit	2012	College-Ready
Kentucky Department of Education	\$9,800,877	States/schools	2011	College-Ready
Kentucky Department of Education	\$1,000,000	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Khan Academy Inc.	\$4,079,361	Nonprofit	2011	College-Ready
Khan Academy Inc.	\$1,464,667	Nonprofit	2010	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
KnowledgeWorks Foundation	\$241,747	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Learning Forward	\$999,795	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	College-Ready
Learning Matters, Inc.	\$25,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
LearnZillion, Inc.	\$1,465,525	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
LearnZillion, Inc.	\$250,000	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
Louisiana Department of Education	\$7,351,708	States/schools	2011	College-Ready
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Inc.	\$151,431	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2010	College-Ready
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	\$3,204,132	Higher education	2011	College-Ready
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	\$115,000	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
MetaMetrics, Inc.	\$3,468,005	Private companies	2010	College-Ready
Michigan State University	\$650,000	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
Military Child Education Coalition	\$563,611	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Military Child Education Coalition	\$269,998	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2009 and earlier	Global Policy & Advocacy
Military Child Education Coalition	\$149,965	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	Global Policy & Advocacy

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Motion Math, Inc.	\$100,000	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
National Association of State Boards of Education	\$1,077,960	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	College-Ready
National Association of State Boards of Education	\$800,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
National Association of State Boards of Education	\$450,675	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2009 and earlier	College-Ready
National Catholic Educational Association	\$100,007	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
National Center for Family Literacy Inc.	\$239,796	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
National Conference of State Legislatures	\$557,046	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	Global Policy & Advocacy
National Congress of Parents and Teachers	\$499,962	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
National Council of Teachers of English	\$249,482	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
National Governors Association Center For Best Practices	\$1,293,904	CCSSO/NGA	2011	College-Ready
National Governors Association Center For Best Practices	\$750,000	CCSSO/NGA	2013	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
National Governors Association Center For Best Practices	\$37,674	CCSSO/NGA	2012	Strategic Partnerships
National Indian Education Association	\$600,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	Global Policy & Advocacy
National Indian Education Association	\$500,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	Strategic Partnerships
National Math and Science Initiative Inc.	\$248,760	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
National Paideia Center Inc	\$659,788	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
National Writing Project	\$3,095,593	Nonprofit	2011	College-Ready
Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Inc.	\$350,000	Nonprofit	2011	College-Ready
New America Foundation	\$200,002	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
New Teacher Center	\$250,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
New Venture Fund	\$10,300,300	Nonprofit	2014	Global Policy & Advocacy
New Venture Fund	\$3,213,686	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
New Venture Fund	\$1,150,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
New Venture Fund	\$378,000	Nonprofit	2011	Global Policy & Advocacy
New Visions for Public Schools, Inc	\$8,149,935	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
New Visions for Public Schools, Inc	\$250,000	States/schools	2013	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
New York University	\$40,282	Higher education	2010	College-Ready
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	\$75,000	States/schools	2011	Community Grants
Partnership for Learning	\$499,492	nonprofit	2014	Community Grants
Pennsylvania Business Council Education Foundation	\$257,391	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2012	College-Ready
Pennsylvania Department of Education	\$526,960	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children	\$240,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	Global Policy & Advocacy
Perkins School for the Blind	\$249,113	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
Policy Innovators In Education Network, Inc.	\$499,951	think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence	\$198,206	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2011	College-Ready
Puget Sound Educational Service District	\$247,465	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
Purdue University	\$1,453,832	Higher education	2010	College-Ready
Reasoning Mind, Inc.	\$742,996	Nonprofit	2011	College-Ready
Regents University Of California Los Angeles	\$942,527	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
Region 8 ESC of Northeast Indiana	\$249,505	States/schools	2013	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Research for Action Inc	\$1,309,409	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2010	College-Ready
Research for Action Inc	\$650,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Inc.	\$4,968,652	Nonprofit	2011	Postsecondary Success
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Inc.	\$2,500,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
Scholastic Inc.	\$4,463,541	Private companies	2011	College-Ready
School District of Philadelphia	\$500,000	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
Six Red Marbles LLC	\$500,000	Private companies	2013	College-Ready
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center	\$440,035	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	Global Policy & Advocacy
Southern Regional Education Board	\$350,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
Stanford University	\$1,400,000	Higher education	2011	College-Ready
Stanford University	\$200,000	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
State Education Technology	\$500,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2012	College-Ready
Student Achievement Partners Inc	\$4,042,920	Nonprofit	2012	College-Ready
Summit Public Schools	\$250,000	States/schools	2013	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
Tennessee Department of Education	\$400,000	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education	\$250,000	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
The Achievement Network	\$3,002,252	Nonprofit	2012	College-Ready
The Achievement Network	\$250,249	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready
The Aspen Institute Inc	\$3,615,655	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
The Aspen Institute Inc	\$1,500,003	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
The Aspen Institute Inc	\$74,290	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	College-Ready
The College-Ready Promise	\$300,000	States/schools	2011	College-Ready
The Education Trust	\$2,039,526	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2009 and earlier	College-Ready
The Fund For Transforming Education in Kentucky Inc	\$1,903,089	nonprofit	2012	College-Ready
The George Washington University	\$259,895	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education	\$3,882,600	Unions	2013	College-Ready
The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education	\$501,580	Unions	2013	College-Ready
The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education	\$100,000	Unions	2014	College-Ready

Grantee	Amount	Type	Year	Issue
The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education	\$99,997	Unions	2012	College-Ready
The SEED Foundation, Inc.	\$200,000	States/schools	2013	College-Ready
The University of the State of New York	\$892,500	States/schools	2010	College-Ready
The University of the State of New York	\$600,000	Higher education	2011	College-Ready
Thomas B. Fordham Institute	\$959,116	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2009 and earlier	College-Ready
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation	\$1,383,041	Think tanks/advocacy groups	2013	Global Policy & Advocacy
United Way Worldwide	\$1,212,571	Nonprofit	2014	Global Policy & Advocacy
University of Florida	\$250,000	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
University of Kentucky Research Foundation	\$1,000,000	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
University of Michigan	\$1,999,999	Higher education	2012	College-Ready
University of Missouri - Columbia	\$249,826	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	\$329,034	Higher education	2011	College-Ready
University of Washington Foundation	\$610,819	Higher education	2013	College-Ready
WestEd	\$30,000	Nonprofit	2013	College-Ready

Appendix G – President Obama’s Speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

TRANSCRIPT

President Obama’s Remarks to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Following are President Obama's remarks to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, as provided by the White House (Delivered March 10, 2009). Location of Speech: Washington Marriott Metro Center Grand Ballroom in Washington, D.C.

Source: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-united-states-hispanic-chamber-commerce>

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you. (Applause.) Si se puede.

AUDIENCE: Si se puede! Si se puede! Si se puede!

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you. Thank you so much. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you for the wonderful introduction, David. And thank you for the great work that you are doing each and every day. And I appreciate such a warm welcome. Some of you I've gotten a chance to know; many of you I'm meeting for the first time. But the spirit of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the desire to create jobs and provide opportunity to people who sometimes have been left out -- that's exactly what this administration is about. That's the essence of the American Dream. And so I'm very proud to have a chance to speak with all of you.

You know, every so often, throughout our history, a generation of Americans bears the responsibility of seeing this country through difficult times and protecting the dream of its founding for posterity. This is a responsibility that's fallen to our generation. Meeting it will require steering our nation's economy through a crisis unlike anything that we have seen in our time.

In the short term, that means jump-starting job creation and restarting lending, and restoring confidence in our markets and our financial system. But it also means taking steps that not only advance our recovery, but lay the foundation for lasting, shared prosperity.

I know there's some who believe we can only handle one challenge at a time. And they forget that Lincoln helped lay down the transcontinental railroad and passed the Homestead Act and created the National Academy of Sciences in the midst of civil war. Likewise, President Roosevelt didn't have the luxury of choosing between ending a depression and fighting a war; he had to do both. President Kennedy didn't have the luxury of choosing between civil rights and

sending us to the moon. And we don't have the luxury of choosing between getting our economy moving now and rebuilding it over the long term.

America will not remain true to its highest ideals -- and America's place as a global economic leader will be put at risk -- unless we not only bring down the crushing cost of health care and transform the way we use energy, but also if we do -- if we don't do a far better job than we've been doing of educating our sons and daughters; unless we give them the knowledge and skills they need in this new and changing world.

For we know that economic progress and educational achievement have always gone hand in hand in America. The land-grant colleges and public high schools transformed the economy of an industrializing nation. The GI Bill generated a middle class that made America's economy unrivaled in the 20th century. Investments in math and science under President Eisenhower gave new opportunities to young scientists and engineers all across the country. It made possible somebody like a Sergei Brin to attend graduate school and found an upstart company called Google that would forever change our world.

The source of America's prosperity has never been merely how ably we accumulate wealth, but how well we educate our people. This has never been more true than it is today. In a 21st-century world where jobs can be shipped wherever there's an Internet connection, where a child born in Dallas is now competing with a child in New Delhi, where your best job qualification is not what you do, but what you know -- education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it's a prerequisite for success.

That's why workers without a four-year degree have borne the brunt of recent layoffs, Latinos most of all. That's why, of the 30 fastest growing occupations in America, half require a Bachelor's degree or more. By 2016, four out of every 10 new jobs will require at least some advanced education or training.

So let there be no doubt: The future belongs to the nation that best educates its citizens -- and my fellow Americans, we have everything we need to be that nation. We have the best universities, the most renowned scholars. We have innovative principals and passionate teachers and gifted students, and we have parents whose only priority is their child's education. We have a legacy of excellence, and an unwavering belief that our children should climb higher than we did.

And yet, despite resources that are unmatched anywhere in the world, we've let our grades slip, our schools crumble, our teacher quality fall short, and other nations outpace us. Let me give you a few statistics. In 8th grade math, we've fallen to 9th place. Singapore's middle-schoolers

outperform ours three to one. Just a third of our 13- and 14-year-olds can read as well as they should. And year after year, a stubborn gap persists between how well white students are doing compared to their African American and Latino classmates. The relative decline of American education is untenable for our economy, it's unsustainable for our democracy, it's unacceptable for our children -- and we can't afford to let it continue.

What's at stake is nothing less than the American Dream. It's what drew my father and so many of your fathers and mothers to our shores in pursuit of an education. It's what led Linda Brown and Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez to bear the standard of all who were attending separate and unequal schools. It's what has led generations of Americans to take on that extra job, to sacrifice the small pleasures, to scrimp and save wherever they can, in hopes of putting away enough, just enough, to give their child the education that they never had. It's that most American of ideas, that with the right education, a child of any race, any faith, any station, can overcome whatever barriers stand in their way and fulfill their God-given potential. (Applause.)

Of course, we've heard all this year after year after year after year -- and far too little has changed. Certainly it hasn't changed in too many overcrowded Latino schools; it hasn't changed in too many inner-city schools that are seeing dropout rates of over 50 percent. It's not changing not because we're lacking sound ideas or sensible plans -- in pockets of excellence across this country, we're seeing what children from all walks of life can and will achieve when we set high standards, have high expectations, when we do a good job of preparing them. Instead, it's because politics and ideology have too often trumped our progress that we're in the situation that we're in.

For decades, Washington has been trapped in the same stale debates that have paralyzed progress and perpetuated our educational decline. Too many supporters of my party have resisted the idea of rewarding excellence in teaching with extra pay, even though we know it can make a difference in the classroom. Too many in the Republican Party have opposed new investments in early education, despite compelling evidence of its importance. So what we get here in Washington is the same old debate about it's more money versus more reform, vouchers versus the status quo. There's been partisanship and petty bickering, but little recognition that we need to move beyond the worn fights of the 20th century if we're going to succeed in the 21st century. (Applause.)

I think you'd all agree that the time for finger-pointing is over. The time for holding us -- holding ourselves accountable is here. What's required is not simply new investments, but new reforms. It's time to expect more from our students. It's time to start rewarding good teachers, stop making excuses for bad ones. It's time to demand results from government at every level. It's time to

prepare every child, everywhere in America, to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world. (Applause.) It's time to give all Americans a complete and competitive education from the cradle up through a career. We've accepted failure for far too long. Enough is enough. America's entire education system must once more be the envy of the world -- and that's exactly what we intend to do.

That's exactly what the budget I'm submitting to Congress has begun to achieve. Now, at a time when we've inherited a trillion-dollar deficit, we will start by doing a little housekeeping, going through our books, cutting wasteful education programs. My outstanding Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who's here today -- stand up, Arne, so everybody can see you. (Applause.) I'm assuming you also saw my Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis. (Applause.) But Secretary Duncan will use only one test when deciding what ideas to support with your precious tax dollars: It's not whether an idea is liberal or conservative, but whether it works. And this will help free up resources for the first pillar of reforming our schools -- investing in early childhood initiatives.

This isn't just about keeping an eye on our children, it's about educating them. Studies show that children in early childhood education programs are more likely to score higher in reading and math, more likely to graduate from high school and attend college, more likely to hold a job, and more likely to earn more in that job. For every dollar we invest in these programs, we get nearly \$10 back in reduced welfare rolls, fewer health care costs, and less crime. That's why the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that I signed into law invests \$5 billion in growing Early Head Start and Head Start, expanding access to quality child care for 150,000 more children from working families, and doing more for children with special needs. And that's why we are going to offer 55,000 first-time parents regular visits from trained nurses to help make sure their children are healthy and prepare them for school and for life. (Applause.)

Even as we invest in early childhood education, let's raise the bar for early learning programs that are falling short. Now, today, some children are enrolled in excellent programs. Some children are enrolled in mediocre programs. And some are wasting away their most formative years in bad programs. That includes the one-fourth of all children who are Hispanic, and who will drive America's workforce of tomorrow, but who are less likely to have been enrolled in an early childhood education program than anyone else.

That's why I'm issuing a challenge to our states: Develop a cutting-edge plan to raise the quality of your early learning programs; show us how you'll work to ensure that children are better prepared for success by the time they enter kindergarten. If you do, we will support you with an Early Learning Challenge Grant that I call on Congress to enact. That's how we will reward

quality and incentivize excellence, and make a down payment on the success of the next generation.

So that's the first pillar of our education reform agenda. The second, we will end what has become a race to the bottom in our schools and instead spur a race to the top by encouraging better standards and assessments. Now, this is an area where we are being outpaced by other nations. It's not that their kids are any smarter than ours -- it's that they are being smarter about how to educate their children. They're spending less time teaching things that don't matter, and more time teaching things that do. They're preparing their students not only for high school or college, but for a career. We are not. Our curriculum for 8th graders is two full years behind top performing countries. That's a prescription for economic decline. And I refuse to accept that America's children cannot rise to this challenge. They can, and they must, and they will meet higher standards in our time. (Applause.)

So let's challenge our states -- let's challenge our states to adopt world-class standards that will bring our curriculums to the 21st century. Today's system of 50 different sets of benchmarks for academic success means 4th grade readers in Mississippi are scoring nearly 70 points lower than students in Wyoming -- and they're getting the same grade. Eight of our states are setting their standards so low that their students may end up on par with roughly the bottom 40 percent of the world.

That's inexcusable. That's why I'm calling on states that are setting their standards far below where they ought to be to stop low-balling expectations for our kids. The solution to low test scores is not lowering standards -- it's tougher, clearer standards. (Applause.) Standards like those in Massachusetts, where 8th graders are -- (applause) -- we have a Massachusetts contingent here. (Laughter.) In Massachusetts, 8th graders are now tying for first -- first in the whole world in science. Other forward-thinking states are moving in the same direction by coming together as part of a consortium. And more states need to do the same. And I'm calling on our nation's governors and state education chiefs to develop standards and assessments that don't simply measure whether students can fill in a bubble on a test, but whether they possess 21st century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking and entrepreneurship and creativity.

That is what we'll help them do later this year -- that what we're going to help them do later this year when we finally make No Child Left Behind live up to its name by ensuring not only that teachers and principals get the funding that they need, but that the money is tied to results. (Applause.) And Arne Duncan will also back up this commitment to higher standards with a fund to invest in innovation in our school districts.

Of course, raising standards alone will not make much of a difference unless we provide teachers and principals with the information they need to make sure students are prepared to meet those standards. And far too few states have data systems like the one in Florida that keep track of a student's education from childhood through college. And far too few districts are emulating the example of Houston and Long Beach, and using data to track how much progress a student is making and where that student is struggling. That's a resource that can help us improve student achievement, and tell us which students had which teachers so we can assess what's working and what's not. That's why we're making a major investment in this area that we will cultivate a new culture of accountability in America's schools.

Now, to complete our race to the top requires the third pillar of reform -- recruiting, preparing, and rewarding outstanding teachers. From the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents, it's the person standing at the front of the classroom. That's why our Recovery Act will ensure that hundreds of thousands of teachers and school personnel are not laid off -- because those Americans are not only doing jobs they can't afford to lose, they're rendering a service our nation cannot afford to lose, either. (Applause.)

America's future depends on its teachers. And so today, I'm calling on a new generation of Americans to step forward and serve our country in our classrooms. If you want to make a difference in the life of our nation, if you want to make the most of your talents and dedication, if you want to make your mark with a legacy that will endure -- then join the teaching profession. America needs you. We need you in our suburbs. We need you in our small towns. We especially need you in our inner cities. We need you in classrooms all across our country.

And if you do your part, then we'll do ours. That's why we're taking steps to prepare teachers for their difficult responsibilities, and encourage them to stay in the profession. That's why we're creating new pathways to teaching and new incentives to bring teachers to schools where they're needed most. That's why we support offering extra pay to Americans who teach math and science to end a teacher shortage in those subjects. It's why we're building on the promising work being done in places like South Carolina's Teachers Advancement Program, and making an unprecedented commitment to ensure that anyone entrusted with educating our children is doing the job as well as it can be done.

Now, here's what that commitment means: It means treating teachers like the professionals they are while also holding them more accountable -- in up to 150 more school districts. New teachers will be mentored by experienced ones. Good teachers will be rewarded with more money for improved student achievement, and asked to accept more responsibilities for lifting up

their schools. Teachers throughout a school will benefit from guidance and support to help them improve.

And just as we've given our teachers all the support they need to be successful, we need to make sure our students have the teacher they need to be successful. And that means states and school districts taking steps to move bad teachers out of the classroom. But let me be clear -- (applause.) Let me be clear -- the overwhelming number of teachers are doing an outstanding job under difficult circumstances. My sister is a teacher, so I know how tough teaching can be. But let me be clear: If a teacher is given a chance or two chances or three chances but still does not improve, there's no excuse for that person to continue teaching. I reject a system that rewards failure and protects a person from its consequences. The stakes are too high. We can afford nothing but the best when it comes to our children's teachers and the schools where they teach. (Applause.)

Now, that leads me to the fourth part of America's education strategy -- promoting innovation and excellence in America's schools. One of the places where much of that innovation occurs is in our most effective charter schools. And these are public schools founded by parents, teachers, and civic or community organizations with broad leeway to innovate -- schools I supported as a state legislator and a United States senator.

But right now, there are many caps on how many charter schools are allowed in some states, no matter how well they're preparing our students. That isn't good for our children, our economy, or our country. Of course, any expansion of charter schools must not result in the spread of mediocrity, but in the advancement of excellence. And that will require states adopting both a rigorous selection and review process to ensure that a charter school's autonomy is coupled with greater accountability -- as well as a strategy, like the one in Chicago, to close charter schools that are not working. Provided this greater accountability, I call on states to reform their charter rules, and lift caps on the number of allowable charter schools, wherever such caps are in place.

Now, even as we foster innovation in where our children are learning, let's also foster innovation in when our children are learning. We can no longer afford an academic calendar designed for when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing the land at the end of each day. That calendar may have once made sense, but today it puts us at a competitive disadvantage. Our children -- listen to this -- our children spend over a month less in school than children in South Korea -- every year. That's no way to prepare them for a 21st century economy. That's why I'm calling for us not only to expand effective after-school programs, but to rethink the school day to incorporate more time -- whether during the summer or through expanded-day programs for children who need it. (Applause.)

Now, I know longer school days and school years are not wildly popular ideas. (Laughter.) Not with Malia and Sasha -- (laughter) -- not in my family, and probably not in yours. But the challenges of a new century demand more time in the classroom. If they can do that in South Korea, we can do it right here in the United States of America.

Of course, no matter how innovative our schools or how effective our teachers, America cannot succeed unless our students take responsibility for their own education. That means showing up for school on time, paying attention in class, seeking out extra tutoring if it's needed, staying out of trouble. To any student who's watching, I say this: Don't even think about dropping out of school. Don't even think about it. (Applause.)

As I said a couple of weeks ago, dropping out is quitting on yourself, it's quitting on your country, and it's not an option -- not anymore. Not when our high school dropout rate has tripled in the past 30 years. Not when high school dropouts earn about half as much as college graduates. Not when Latino students are dropping out faster than just about anyone else. It's time for all of us, no matter what our backgrounds, to come together and solve this epidemic.

Stemming the tide of dropouts will require turning around our low-performing schools. Just 2,000 high schools in cities like Detroit and Los Angeles and Philadelphia produce over 50 percent of America's dropouts. And yet there are too few proven strategies to transform these schools. And there are too few partners to get the job done.

So today, I'm issuing a challenge to educators and lawmakers, parents and teachers alike: Let us all make turning around our schools our collective responsibility as Americans. And that will require new investments in innovative ideas -- that's why my budget invests in developing new strategies to make sure at-risk students don't give up on their education; new efforts to give dropouts who want to return to school the help they need to graduate; and new ways to put those young men and women who have left school back on a pathway to graduation.

Now, the fifth part of America's education strategy is providing every American with a quality higher education -- whether it's college or technical training. Never has a college degree been more important. Never has it been more expensive. And at a time when so many of our families are bearing enormous economic burdens, the rising cost of tuition threatens to shatter dreams. And that's why we will simplify federal college assistance forms so it doesn't take a Ph.D to apply for financial aid. (Applause.)

That's why we're already taking steps to make college or technical training affordable. For the first time ever, Pell Grants will not be subject to the politics of the moment or the whim of the

market — they will be a commitment that Congress is required to uphold each and every year. (Applause.) Not only that; because rising costs mean Pell Grants cover less than half as much tuition as they did 30 years ago, we're raising the maximum Pell Grant to \$5,550 a year and indexing it above inflation. We're also providing a \$2,500-a-year tuition tax credit for students from working families. And we're modernizing and expanding the Perkins Loan Program to make sure schools like UNLV don't get a tenth as many Perkins loans as schools like Harvard.

To help pay for all of this, we're putting students ahead of lenders by eliminating wasteful student loan subsidies that cost taxpayers billions each year. All in all, we are making college affordable for 7 million more students with a sweeping investment in our children's futures and America's success. And I call on Congress to join me and the American people by making these investments possible. (Applause.)

This is how we will help meet our responsibility as a nation to open the doors of college to every American. But it will also be the responsibility of colleges and universities to control spiraling costs. We can't just keep on putting more money in and universities and colleges not doing their part to hold down tuitions. And it's the responsibility of our students to walk through the doors of opportunity.

In just a single generation, America has fallen from 2nd place to 11th place in the portion of students completing college. That is unfortunate, but it's by no means irreversible. With resolve and the right investments, we can retake the lead once more. And that's why, in my address to the nation the other week, I called on Americans to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training, with the goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by the year 2020. And to meet that goal, we are investing \$2.5 billion to identify and support innovative initiatives across the country that achieve results in helping students persist and graduate.

So let's not stop at education with college. Let's recognize a 21st century reality: Learning doesn't end in our early 20s. Adults of all ages need opportunities to earn new degrees and new skills -- especially in the current economic environment. That means working with all our universities and schools, including community colleges -- a great and undervalued asset -- to prepare workers for good jobs in high-growth industries; and to improve access to job training not only for young people who are just starting their careers, but for older workers who need new skills to change careers. And that's going to be one of the key tasks that Secretary Solis is involved with, is making sure that lifelong learning is a reality and a possibility for more Americans.

It's through initiatives like these that we'll see more Americans earn a college degree, or receive advanced training, and pursue a successful career. And that's why I'm calling on Congress to work with me to enact these essential reforms, and to reauthorize the Workforce Reinvestment Act. That's how we will round out a complete and competitive education in the United States of America.

So here's the bottom line: Yes, we need more money; yes, we need more reform; yes, we need to hold ourselves more accountable for every dollar we spend. But there's one more ingredient I want to talk about. No government policy will make any difference unless we also hold ourselves more accountable as parents -- because government, no matter how wise or efficient, cannot turn off the TV or put away the video games. Teachers, no matter how dedicated or effective, cannot make sure your child leaves for school on time and does their homework when they get back at night. These are things only a parent can do. These are things that our parents must do.

I say this not only as a father, but also as a son. When I was a child my mother and I lived overseas, and she didn't have the money to send me to the fancy international school where all the American kids went to school. So what she did was she supplemented my schooling with lessons from a correspondence course. And I can still picture her waking me up at 4:30 a.m., five days a week, to go over some lessons before I went to school. And whenever I'd complain and grumble and find some excuse and say, "Awww, I'm sleepy," she'd patiently repeat to me her most powerful defense. She'd say, "This is no picnic for me either, buster." (Laughter and applause.)

And when you're a kid you don't think about the sacrifices they're making. She had to work; I just had to go to school. But she'd still wake up every day to make sure I was getting what I needed for my education. And it's because she did this day after day, week after week, because of all the other opportunities and breaks that I got along the way, all the sacrifices that my grandmother and my grandfather made along the way, that I can stand here today as President of the United States. It's because of the sacrifices -- (applause.) See, I want every child in this country to have the same chance that my mother gave me, that my teachers gave me, that my college professors gave me, that America gave me.

You know these stories; you've lived them, as well. All of you have a similar story to tell. You know, it's -- I want children like Yvonne Bojorquez to have that chance. Yvonne is a student at Village Academy High School in California. Now, Village Academy is a 21st century school where cutting edge technologies are used in the classroom, where college prep and career training are offered to all who seek it, and where the motto is "respect, responsibility, and results."

Now, a couple of months ago, Yvonne and her class made a video talking about the impact that our struggling economy was having on their lives. And some of them spoke about their parents being laid off, or their homes facing foreclosure, or their inability to focus on school with everything that was happening at home. And when it was her turn to speak, Yvonne said: "We've all been affected by this economic crisis. [We] are all college bound students; we're all businessmen, and doctors and lawyers and all this great stuff. And we have all this potential -- but the way things are going, we're not going to be able to [fulfill it]."

It was heartbreaking that a girl so full of promise was so full of worry that she and her class titled their video, "Is anybody listening?" So, today, there's something I want to say to Yvonne and her class at Village Academy: I am listening. We are listening. America is listening. (Applause.) And we will not rest until your parents can keep your jobs -- we will not rest until your parents can keep their jobs and your families can keep their homes, and you can focus on what you should be focusing on -- your own education; until you can become the businessmen, doctors, and lawyers of tomorrow, until you can reach out and grasp your dreams for the future.

For in the end, Yvonne's dream is a dream shared by all Americans. It's the founding promise of our nation: That we can make of our lives what we will; that all things are possible for all people; and that here in America, our best days lie ahead. I believe that. I truly believe if I do my part, and you, the American people, do yours, then we will emerge from this crisis a stronger nation, and pass the dream of our founding on to posterity, ever safer than before. (Applause.)

Thank you very much. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause.)

Appendix H – President Obama’s Speech at the Signing of the Every Student Succeeds Act

Speech on Signing the 'Every Student Succeeds Act'

Delivered 10 December 2015, Eisenhower Building, Washington, D.C.

Source Link: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamaeverystudentsucceeds.htm>

Welcome to the White House. First of all, I want to thank Antonio for being such an outstanding role model. Back in 2011 -- when he was much shorter -- I visited Kenmore Middle School and saw firsthand their great work helping students like Antonio achieve their potential. And that's why we're here today.

This is an early Christmas present. After more than 10 years, members of Congress from both parties have come together to revise our national education law. A Christmas miracle: A bipartisan bill signing right here. So I was telling Lamar we should do this more often. I love it when we're signing bipartisan bills. Today, I'm proud to sign a law that's going to make sure that every student is prepared to succeed in the 21st century.

The goals of No Child Left Behind, the predecessor of this law, were the right ones: High standards. Accountability. Closing the achievement gap. Making sure that every child was learning, not just some. But in practice, it often fell short. It didn't always consider the specific needs of each community. It led to too much testing during classroom time. It often forced schools and school districts into cookie-cutter reforms that didn't always produce the kinds of results that we wanted to see. And that's okay -- sometimes reform efforts require you try something, it doesn't work, you learn some lessons, and you make modifications.

So my Administration, when we came into office, tried some different things. We tried to lead a Race to the Top. That's why we acted to give states that were willing to embrace reforms -- that they helped to formulate -- more flexibility in how to improve student achievement. They were receiving waivers from some of the requirements of No Child Left Behind. But the truth is that could only do so much. And that's why, for years, I have called on Congress to come together and get a bipartisan effort to fix No Child Left Behind.

It took a lot of time; it required a lot of work. But thanks to the tireless efforts of many of the people on this stage and some people who are in attendance here today, we finally reached that deal.

There are some people that I especially want to thank. First of all, Senators Lamar Alexander and Patty Murray on the Senate side, and Representatives John Kline and Bobby Scott on the House side, as well as their dedicated staffs. This would not have happened without them.

And I just want to point out that it's not as if there weren't some significant ideological differences on some of these issues. No, there were, but I think this is really a good example of how bipartisanship can work. People did not agree on everything at the outset, but they were willing to listen to each other in a civil, constructive way, and to work through these issues, compromise where necessary, while still keeping their eye on the ball. And I think it's really a

testament of the four leaders of the respective committees that they set that kind of tone. And that's something that we don't always see here in Washington. There wasn't a lot of grandstanding, not a lot of posturing -- just a lot of really good, hard work. So I just want to, again, thank them for the outstanding work that they did.

I also want to thank my outgoing Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Arne has dedicated his life to the cause of education -- and sometimes in the nicest possible way, he has gotten on people's nerves because he has pushed them and prodded them and tried to make sure that we set high expectations and that we are holding ourselves accountable for children's performance -- or the school's performance and how they were delivering for our kids. And had he not been, I believe, as tenacious as he was, I think that we would not have as good of a product as we do here today. And so I could not be prouder of Arne Duncan. And I want acknowledge him.

We are going to miss Arne Duncan a lot. Fortunately, in addition to some great staff that he assembled that is going to be staying on, we also have a great replacement for Arne in Dr. John King, who is going to be doing outstanding work helping to implement this.

In addition, obviously we've had some outstanding advocates. We've got our teachers unions, we've got our civil rights organizations, we've got philanthropies -- all of who -- community groups -- who have been active and involved, and the governors organizations and school districts have also been involved, the superintendents. So we want to thank all them for their contributions. All the stakeholders have really buckled down to make this day possible.

And the law comes at an important moment. Over the past seven years, the good news is that our students have made real strides. We've seen states raise academic expectations for all students. That means that we're in a better position to out-teach and out-compete other nations at a time when knowledge is really the single-biggest determinant of economic performance. High school graduation rates have reached an all-time high; dropout rates have hit historic lows. The number of high schools so bad they're called "dropout factories" has been cut almost in half. We're training tens of thousands of outstanding math and science teachers. More students are graduating from college than ever before, and more than a million additional black and Hispanic students are now going to college.

So there is some real good work that's been done, a foundation to build from. But we're here because we all know that there's a lot more work to be done. As wonderful as Antonio's school is, as wonderful as a learning experience is as a lot of our young people are receiving, we know that there are other schools that just aren't hitting the mark yet. And in today's economy, a high-quality education is a prerequisite for success.

We're going to have to have our young people master not just the basics but also become critical thinkers and creative problem solvers. And our competitive advantage depends on whether our kids are prepared to seize the opportunities for tomorrow. So we need to build on the momentum that has already been established. We've got to learn what works and do more of that, and we've got to get rid of the stuff that doesn't work. And that's exactly what the Every Student Succeeds Act does.

First, this law focuses on a national goal of ensuring that all of our students graduate prepared for college and future careers. It builds on the reforms that have helped us make so much progress already, holding everybody to high standards for teaching and learning, empowering states and school districts to develop their own strategies for improvement, dedicating resources to our most vulnerable children. And this law requires states to invest in helping students and schools improve, and focusing on the lowest-performing schools and closing those big achievement gaps.

Second, this bill makes long-overdue fixes to the last education law, replacing the one-size fits-all approach to reform with a commitment to provide every student with a well-rounded education. It creates real partnerships between the states, which will have new flexibility to tailor their improvement plans, and the federal government, which will have the oversight to make sure that the plans are sound.

It helps states and districts reduce unnecessary standardized tests -- something we talked about a couple of months ago, because what we want to do is to get rid of unnecessary standardized tests so that more teachers can spend time engaging in student learning while, at the same time, making sure that parents and teachers have clear information on their children's academic performance.

Number three, we know that the early years can make a huge difference in a child's life, so this law lays the foundation to expand access to high-quality preschools, and it creates incentives for innovative approaches to learning and for supporting great teachers.

And finally, this bill upholds the core value that animated the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed by President Lyndon Johnson -- the value that says education, the key to economic opportunity, is a civil right. With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamental American ideal that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make out of their lives what they will.

So this is a big step in the right direction, a true bipartisan effort, a reminder of what can be done when people enter into these issues in a spirit of listening and compromise. But, of course, now the hard work begins. Laws are only as good as the implementation. And that means that we're going to have to be engaging with the schools and communities all across the country, educators, school leaders, families, students, elected officials, community leaders, philanthropies -- all to make the promise of this law reality.

And, by the way, it's going to take students like Antonio. He's doing his part. He's taking advanced classes to get a head start on high school credits. He plays the violin. He plays sports. He volunteers. He owns one share of stock in Tesla. So he's clearly going places. I'd invest in him if I could. But one of the reasons Antonio is thriving is he's got great teachers and a great principal at Kenmore. They saw that spark in him, and, like all great educators, they're helping him to harness his energy and his curiosity and his talents.

And that's what we want every single child in America to have. We just want to give them a chance. And so many of them are full of that same talent and drive, but we let them slip through the cracks, or we're not creative enough in thinking about how they can be engaged, or they just

don't have the resources that they need in the classroom, or they fell behind early because they didn't get the support that they needed given the tough circumstances they were born into.

And we want to make sure that through this piece of legislation, with our hard work, with our focus, with our discipline, with our passion, with our commitment, that every kid is given the same opportunities that Antonio is getting. I want this not just because it's good for the students themselves, not just because it's good for the communities involved, not only because it's good for our economy, but because it really goes to the essence of what we are about as Americans.

There was a time I think when upward mobility was the hallmark of America. We've slipped on that front compared to other countries. And some of it is because where we used to be so far ahead of other countries in investing in education for every child, now on some indicators, we've been lagging behind. Hopefully, this is going to get us back out front.

There's nothing more essential to living up to the ideals of this nation than making sure every child is able to achieve their God-given potential. And I could not be prouder of the people on this stage and those of you in the audience who helped us take just one step closer to that reality.

So with that, let me sign this bill.

Appendix I – Diane Ravitch Speech to the Modern Language Association

Diane Ravitch, the education historian who has become the leader of the movement against corporate-influenced school reform, gave this speech to the Modern Language Association in Chicago, Illinois on Jan. 11, 2014 about the past, present and future of the Common Core State Standards.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/01/18/everything-you-need-to-know-about-common-core-ravitch/>

As an organization of teachers and scholars devoted to the study of language and literature, MLA should be deeply involved in the debate about the **Common Core standards**. The Common Core standards were developed in 2009 and released in 2010. Within a matter of months, they had been endorsed by 45 states and the District of Columbia. At present, publishers are aligning their materials with the Common Core, technology companies are creating software and curriculum aligned with the Common Core, and two federally-funded consortia have created online tests of the Common Core.

What are the **Common Core standards**? Who produced them? Why are they controversial? How did their adoption happen so quickly?

As scholars of the humanities, you are well aware that every historical event is subject to interpretation. There are different ways to answer the questions I just posed. Originally, this session was designed to be a discussion between me and **David Coleman**, who is generally acknowledged as the architect of the Common Core standards. Some months ago, we both agreed on the date and format. But Mr. Coleman, now president of the College Board, discovered that he had a conflicting meeting and could not be here.

So, unfortunately, you will hear only my narrative, not his, which would be quite different. I have no doubt that you will have no difficulty getting access to his version of the narrative, which is the same as Secretary Arne Duncan's.

He would tell you that the standards were created by the states, that they were widely and quickly embraced because so many educators wanted common standards for teaching language, literature, and mathematics. But he would not be able to explain why so many educators and parents are now opposed to the standards and are reacting angrily to the testing that accompanies them.

I will try to do that.

I will begin by setting the context for the development of the standards.

They arrive at a time when American public education and its teachers are under attack. Never have public schools been as subject to upheaval, assault, and chaos as they are today. Unlike modern corporations, which extol creative disruption, schools need stability, not constant turnover and change. Yet for the past dozen years, ill-advised federal and state policies have rained down on students, teachers, principals, and schools.

George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind and Barack Obama's [Race to the Top](#) have combined to impose a punitive regime of standardized testing on the schools. NCLB was passed by Congress in 2001 and signed into law in 2002. NCLB law required schools to test every child in grades 3-8 every year; by 2014, said the law, every child must be "proficient" or schools would face escalating sanctions. The ultimate sanction for failure to raise test scores was firing the staff and closing the school.

Because the stakes were so high, NCLB encouraged teachers to teach to the test. In many schools, the curriculum was narrowed; the only subjects that mattered were reading and mathematics. What was not tested—the arts, history, civics, literature, geography, science, physical education—didn't count. Some states, like New York, gamed the system by dropping the passing mark each year, giving the impression that its students were making phenomenal progress when they were not. Some districts, like Atlanta, El Paso, and the District of Columbia, were caught up in cheating scandals. In response to this relentless pressure, test scores rose, but not as much as they had before the adoption of NCLB.

Then along came the Obama administration, with its signature program called Race to the Top. In response to the economic crisis of 2008, Congress gave the U.S. Department of Education \$5 billion to promote "reform." Secretary Duncan launched a competition for states called "Race to the Top." If states wanted any part of that money, they had to agree to certain conditions. They had to agree to evaluate teachers to a significant degree by the rise or fall of their students' test scores; they had to agree to increase the number of privately managed charter schools; they had to agree to adopt "college and career ready standards," which were understood to be the not-yet-finished Common Core standards; they had to agree to "turnaround" low-performing schools by such tactics as firing the principal and part or all of the school staff; and they had to agree to collect unprecedented amounts of personally identifiable information about every student and store it in a data warehouse. It became an article of faith in Washington and in state capitols, with the help of propagandistic films like "[Waiting for Superman](#)," that if students had low scores, it must be the fault of bad teachers. Poverty, we heard again and again from people like Bill Gates, Joel Klein, and [Michelle Rhee](#), was just an excuse for bad teachers, who should be fired without delay or due process.

These two federal programs, which both rely heavily on standardized testing, has produced a massive demoralization of educators; an unprecedented exodus of experienced educators, who were replaced in many districts by young, inexperienced, low-wage teachers; the closure of many public schools, especially in poor and minority districts; the opening of thousands of privately managed charters; an increase in low-quality for-profit charter schools and low-quality online charter schools; a widespread attack on teachers' due process rights and collective bargaining rights; the near-collapse of public education in urban districts like Detroit and Philadelphia, as public schools are replaced by privately managed charter schools; a burgeoning educational-industrial complex of testing corporations, charter chains, and technology companies that view public education as an emerging market. Hedge funds, entrepreneurs, and real estate investment corporations invest enthusiastically in this emerging market, encouraged by federal tax credits, lavish fees, and the prospect of huge profits from taxpayer dollars. Celebrities, tennis

stars, basketball stars, and football stars are opening their own name-brand schools with public dollars, even though they know nothing about education.

No other nation in the world has inflicted so many changes or imposed so many mandates on its teachers and public schools as we have in the past dozen years. No other nation tests every student every year as we do. Our students are the most over-tested in the world. No other nation—at least no high-performing nation—judges the quality of teachers by the test scores of their students. Most researchers agree that this methodology is fundamentally flawed, that it is inaccurate, unreliable, and unstable, that the highest ratings will go to teachers with the most affluent students and the lowest ratings will go to teachers of English learners, teachers of students with disabilities, and teachers in high-poverty schools. Nonetheless, the U.S. Department of Education wants every state and every district to do it. Because of these federal programs, our schools have become obsessed with standardized testing, and have turned over to the testing corporations the responsibility for rating, ranking, and labeling our students, our teachers, and our schools.

The Pearson Corporation has become the ultimate arbiter of the fate of students, teachers, and schools.

This is the policy context in which the Common Core standards were developed. Five years ago, when they were written, major corporations, major foundations, and the key policymakers at the Department of Education agreed that public education was a disaster and that the only salvation for it was a combination of school choice—including privately managed charters and vouchers—national standards, and a weakening or elimination of such protections as collective bargaining, tenure, and seniority. At the same time, the political and philanthropic leaders maintained a passionate faith in the value of standardized tests and the data that they produced as measures of quality and as ultimate, definitive judgments on people and on schools. The agenda of both Republicans and Democrats converged around the traditional Republican agenda of standards, choice, and accountability. In my view, this convergence has nothing to do with improving education or creating equality of opportunity but everything to do with cutting costs, standardizing education, shifting the delivery of education from high-cost teachers to low-cost technology, reducing the number of teachers, and eliminating unions and pensions.

The Common Core standards were written in 2009 under the aegis of several D.C.-based organizations: the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve. The development process was led behind closed doors by a small organization called Student Achievement Partners, headed by David Coleman. The writing group of 27 contained few educators, but a significant number of representatives of the testing industry. From the outset, the Common Core standards were marked by the absence of public participation, transparency, or educator participation. In a democracy, transparency is crucial, because transparency and openness builds trust. Those crucial ingredients were lacking.

The U.S. Department of Education is legally prohibited from exercising any influence or control over curriculum or instruction in the schools, so it could not contribute any funding to the expensive task of creating national standards. The Gates Foundation stepped in and assumed that responsibility. It gave millions to the National Governors Association, to the Council of Chief School Officers, to Achieve and to Student Achievement Partners. Once the standards were

written, Gates gave millions more to almost every think tank and education advocacy group in Washington to evaluate the standards—even to some that had no experience evaluating standards—and to promote and help to implement the standards. Even the two major teachers' unions accepted millions of dollars to help advance the Common Core standards. Altogether, the Gates Foundation has expended nearly \$200 million to pay for the development, evaluation, implementation, and promotion of the Common Core standards. And the money tap is still open, with millions more awarded this past fall to promote the Common Core standards. Some states—like Kentucky—adopted the Common Core standards sight unseen. Some—like Texas—refused to adopt them sight unseen. Some—like Massachusetts—adopted them even though their own standards were demonstrably better and had been proven over time. The advocates of the standards saw them as a way to raise test scores by making sure that students everywhere in every grade were taught using the same standards. They believed that common standards would automatically guarantee equity. Some spoke of the Common Core as a civil rights issue. They emphasized that the Common Core standards would be far more rigorous than most state standards and they predicted that students would improve their academic performance in response to raising the bar.

Integral to the Common Core was the expectation that they would be tested on computers using online standardized exams. As Secretary Duncan's chief of staff wrote at the time, the Common Core was intended to create a national market for book publishers, technology companies, testing corporations, and other vendors.

What the advocates ignored is that test scores are heavily influenced by socioeconomic status. Standardized tests are normed on a bell curve. The upper half of the curve has an abundance of those who grew up in favorable circumstances, with educated parents, books in the home, regular medical care, and well-resourced schools. Those who dominate the bottom half of the bell curve are the kids who lack those advantages, whose parents lack basic economic security, whose schools are overcrowded and under-resourced. To expect tougher standards and a renewed emphasis on standardized testing to reduce poverty and inequality is to expect what never was and never will be.

Who supported the standards? Secretary Duncan has been their loudest cheerleader. Governor Jeb Bush of Florida and former DC Chancellor Michelle Rhee urged their rapid adoption. Joel Klein and Condoleezza Rice chaired a commission for the Council on Foreign Relations, which concluded that the Common Core standards were needed to protect national security. Major corporations purchased full-page ads in the New York Times and other newspapers to promote the Common Core. ExxonMobil is especially vociferous in advocating for Common Core, taking out advertisements on television and other news media saying that the standards are needed to prepare our workforce for global competition. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce endorsed the standards, saying they were necessary to prepare workers for the global marketplace. The Business Roundtable stated that its #1 priority is the full adoption and implementation of the Common Core standards. All of this excitement was generated despite the fact that no one knows whether the Common Core will fulfill any of these promises. It will take 12 years whether we know what its effects are.

The Common Core standards have both allies and opponents on the right. Tea-party groups at the grassroots level oppose the standards, claiming that they will lead to a federal takeover of education. The standards also have allies and opponents on the left.

I was aware of Common Core from the outset. In 2009, I urged its leaders to plan on field testing them to find out how the standards worked in real classrooms with real teachers and real students. Only then would we know whether they improve college-readiness and equity. In 2010, I was invited to meet at the White House with senior administration officials, and I advised them to field test the standards to make sure that they didn't widen the achievement gaps between haves and have-nots.

After all, raising the bar might make more students fail, and failure would be greatest amongst those who cannot clear the existing bar.

Last spring, when it became clear that there would be no field testing, I decided I could not support the standards. I objected to the lack of any democratic participation in their development; I objected to the absence of any process for revising them, and I was fearful that they were setting unreachable targets for most students. I also was concerned that they would deepen the sense of crisis about American education that has been used to attack the very principle of public education. In my latest book, I demonstrated, using data on the U.S. Department of Education website that the current sense of crisis about our nation's public schools was exaggerated; that test scores were the highest they had ever been in our history for whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asians; that graduation rates for all groups were the highest in our history; and that the dropout rate was the lowest ever in our history.

My fears were confirmed by the [Common Core tests](#). Wherever they have been implemented, they have caused a dramatic collapse of test scores. In state after state, the passing rates dropped by about 30%. This was not happenstance. This was failure by design. Let me explain. The Obama administration awarded \$350 million to two groups to create tests for the Common Core standards. The testing consortia jointly decided to use a very high passing mark, which is known as a "cut score." The Common Core testing consortia decided that the passing mark on their tests would be aligned with the proficient level on the federal tests called NAEP. This is a level typically reached by about 35-40% of students. Massachusetts is the only state in which as many as 50% ever reached the NAEP proficient level. The testing consortia set the bar so high that most students were sure to fail, and they did.

In New York state, which gave the Common Core tests last spring, only 30% of students across the state passed the tests. Only 3% of English language learners passed. Only 5% of students with disabilities passed. Fewer than 20% of African American and Hispanic students passed. By the time the results were reported in August, the students did not have the same teachers; the teachers saw the scores, but did not get any item analysis. They could not use the test results for diagnostic purposes, to help students. Their only value was to rank students.

When New York state education officials held public hearings, parents showed up en masse to complain about the Common Core testing. Secretary Duncan dismissed them as "[white suburban moms](#)" who were disappointed to learn that their child was not as brilliant as they thought and their public school was not as good as they thought. But he was wrong: the parents were

outraged not because they thought their children were brilliant but because they did not believe that their children were failures. What, exactly, is the point of crushing the hearts and minds of young children by setting a standard so high that 70% are certain to fail?

The financial cost of implementing Common Core has barely been mentioned in the national debates. All Common Core testing will be done online. This is a bonanza for the tech industry and other vendors. Every school district must buy new computers, new teaching materials, and new bandwidth for the testing. At a time when school budgets have been cut in most states and many thousands of teachers have been laid off, school districts across the nation will spend billions to pay for Common Core testing. [Los Angeles alone](#) committed to spend \$1 billion on iPads for the tests; the money is being taken from a bond issue approved by voters for construction and repair of school facilities. Meanwhile, the district has cut teachers of the arts, class size has increased, and necessary repairs are deferred because the money will be spent on iPads. The iPads will be obsolete in a year or two, and the Pearson content loaded onto the iPads has only a three-year license. The cost of implementing the Common Core and the new tests is likely to run into the billions at a time of deep budget cuts.

Other controversies involve the standards themselves. Early childhood educators are nearly unanimous in saying that no one who wrote the standards had any expertise in the education of very young children. More than 500 early childhood educators signed a joint statement complaining that the standards were developmentally inappropriate for children in the early grades. The standards, they said, emphasize academic skills and leave inadequate time for imaginative play. They also objected to the likelihood that young children would be subjected to standardized testing. And yet proponents of the Common Core insist that children as young as 5 or 6 or 7 should be on track to be college-and-career ready, even though children this age are not likely to think about college, and most think of careers as cowboys, astronauts, or firefighters. There has also been heated argument about the standards' insistence that reading must be divided equally in the elementary grades between fiction and informational text, and divided 70-30 in favor of informational text in high school. Where did the writers of the standards get these percentages? They relied on the federal NAEP—the National Assessment of Educational Progress—which uses these percentages as instructions to test developers. NAEP never intended that these numbers would be converted into instructional mandates for teachers. This idea that informational text should take up half the students' reading time in the early grades and 70% in high school led to outlandish claims that teachers would no longer be allowed to teach whole novels. Somewhat hysterical articles asserted that the classics would be banned while students were required to read government documents. The standards contain no such demands. Defenders of the Common Core standards said that the percentages were misunderstood. They said they [referred to the entire curriculum](#)—math, science, and history, not just English. But since teachers in math, science, and history are not known for assigning fiction, why was this even mentioned in the standards? Which administrator will be responsible for policing whether precisely 70% of the reading in senior year is devoted to informational text? Who will keep track?

The fact is that the Common Core standards should never have set forth any percentages at all. If they really did not mean to impose numerical mandates on English teachers, they set off a firestorm of criticism for no good reason. Other nations have national standards, and I don't know of any that tell teachers how much time to devote to fiction and how much time to devote

to informational text. Frankly, I think that teachers are quite capable of making that decision for themselves. If they choose to teach a course devoted only to fiction or devoted only to non-fiction, that should be their choice, not a mandate imposed by a committee in 2009.

Another problem presented by the Common Core standards is that there is no one in charge of fixing them. If teachers find legitimate problems and seek remedies, there is no one to turn to. If the demands for students in kindergarten and first grade are developmentally inappropriate, no one can make changes. The original writing committee no longer exists. No organization or agency has the authority to revise the standards. The Common Core standards might as well be written in stone. This makes no sense. They were not handed down on Mount Sinai, they are not an infallible Papal encyclical, why is there no process for improving and revising them?

Furthermore, what happens to the children who fail? Will they be held back a grade? Will they be held back again and again? If most children fail, as they did in New York, what will happen to them? How will they catch up? The advocates of the standards insist that low-scoring students will become high-scoring students if the tests are rigorous, but what if they are wrong? What if the failure rate remains staggeringly high as it is now? What if it improves marginally as students become accustomed to the material, and the failure rate drops from 70% to 50%? What will we do with the 50% who can't jump over the bar? Teachers across the country will be fired if the scores of their pupils do not go up. This is nuts. We have a national policy that is a theory based on an assumption grounded in hope. And it might be wrong, with disastrous consequences for real children and real teachers.

In some states, teachers say that the lessons are scripted and deprive them of their professional autonomy, the autonomy they need to tailor their lessons to the needs of the students in front of them. Behind the Common Core standards lies a blind faith in standardization of tests and curriculum, and perhaps, of children as well. Yet we know that even in states with strong standards, like Massachusetts and California, there are wide variations in test scores. Tom Loveless of the Brookings Institution predicted that the Common Core standards were likely to make little, if any, difference. No matter how high and uniform their standards, there are variations in academic achievement within states, there are variations within districts, there are variations within every school.

It is good to have standards. I believe in standards, but they must not be rigid, inflexible, and prescriptive. Teachers must have the flexibility to tailor standards to meet the students in their classrooms, the students who can't read English, the students who are two grade levels behind, the students who are homeless, the students who just don't get it and just don't care, the students who frequently miss class. Standards alone cannot produce a miraculous transformation. I do not mean to dismiss the Common Core standards altogether. They could be far better, if there were a process whereby experienced teachers were able to fix them. They could be made developmentally appropriate for the early grades, so that children have time for play and games, as well as learning to read and do math and explore nature.

The numerical demands for 50-50 or 70-30 literature vs. informational text should be eliminated. They serve no useful purpose and they have no justification.

In every state, teachers should work together to figure out how the standards can be improved. Professional associations like the National Council for the Teaching of English and the National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics should participate in a process by which the standards are regularly reviewed, revised, and updated by classroom teachers and scholars to respond to genuine problems in the field.

The Common Core standards should be decoupled from standardized testing, especially online standardized testing. Most objections to the standards are caused by the testing. The tests are too long, and many students give up; the passing marks on the tests were set so high as to create failure.

Yet the test scores will be used to rate students, teachers, and schools.

The standardized testing should become optional. It should include authentic writing assignments that are judged by humans, not by computers. It too needs oversight by professional communities of scholars and teachers.

There is something about the Common Core standards and testing, about their demand for uniformity and standardization that reeks of early twentieth century factory-line thinking. There is something about them that feels obsolete. Today, most sectors of our economy have standards that are open-sourced and flexible, that rely upon the wisdom of practitioners that are constantly updated and improved.

In the present climate, the Common Core standards and testing will become the driving force behind the creation of a test-based meritocracy. With David Coleman in charge of the College Board, the SAT will be aligned with the Common Core; so will the ACT. Both testing organizations were well represented in the writing of the standards; representatives of these two organizations comprised 12 of the 27 members of the original writing committee. The Common Core tests are a linchpin of the federal effort to commit K-12 education to the new world of Big Data. The tests are the necessary ingredient to standardize teaching, curriculum, instruction, and schooling. Only those who pass these rigorous tests will get a high school diploma. Only those with high scores on these rigorous tests will be able to go to college.

No one has come up with a plan for the 50% or more who never get a high school diploma. These days, a man or woman without a high school diploma has meager chances to make their way in this society. They will end up in society's dead-end jobs.

Some might say this is just. I say it is not just. I say that we have allowed the testing corporations to assume too much power in allotting power, prestige, and opportunity. Those who are wealthy can afford to pay fabulous sums for tutors so their children can get high scores on standardized tests and college entrance exams. Those who are affluent live in districts with ample resources for their schools. Those who are poor lack those advantages. Our nation suffers an opportunity gap, and the opportunity gap creates a test score gap.

You may know Michael Young's book *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. It was published in 1958 and has gone through many editions. A decade ago, Young added a new introduction in which he warned that a meritocracy could be sad and fragile. He wrote:

If the rich and powerful were encouraged by the general culture to believe that they fully deserved all they had, how arrogant they could become, and if they were convinced it was all for the common good, how ruthless in pursuing their own advantage. Power corrupts, and therefore one of the secrets of a good society is that power should always be open to criticism. A good society should provide sinew for revolt as well as for power.

But authority cannot be humbled unless ordinary people, however much they have been rejected by the educational system, have the confidence to assert themselves against the mighty. If they think themselves inferior, if they think they deserve on merit to have less worldly goods and less worldly power than a select minority, they can be damaged in their own self-esteem, and generally demoralized.

Even if it could be demonstrated that ordinary people had less native ability than those selected for high position, that would not mean that they deserved to get less. Being a member of the "lucky sperm club" confers no moral right or advantage. What one is born with, or without, is not of one's own doing.

We must then curb the misuse of the Common Core standards: Those who like them should use them, but they should be revised continually to adjust to reality. Stop the testing. Stop the rating and ranking. Do not use them to give privilege to those who pass them or to deny the diploma necessary for a decent life. Remove the high-stakes that policymakers intend to attach to them. Use them to enrich instruction, but not to standardize it.

I fear that the Common Core plan of standards and testing will establish a test-based meritocracy that will harm our democracy by parceling out opportunity, by ranking and rating every student in relation to their test scores.

We cannot have a decent democracy unless we begin with the supposition that every human life is of equal value. Our society already has far too much inequality of wealth and income. We should do nothing to stigmatize those who already get the least of society's advantages. We should bend our efforts to change our society so that each and every one of us has the opportunity to learn, the resources needed to learn, and the chance to have a good and decent life, regardless of one's test scores.

Appendix J – Lexical Style: Key Word Comparison between Bill Gates and President Obama’s Speeches

Key Words	Bill Gates	President Obama
	2008 2014	2009 2015
Achieve/Achievement	14 0	6 5
America/American/America’s	3 2	50 4
Believe	6 1	3 1
Career	0 3	7 1
Change	10 3	5 0
College	17 9	21 3
Consistent	1 14	0 0
Cost	0 0	6 0
Dream	0 0	8 0
Equal/Equality	1 2	1 0
Evidence	9 1	1 0
Freedom	0 3	0 0
Great/Greater	14 4	5 7
High/Higher/Highest	22 10	19 9
I/I’m/I’d/I’ll	10 14	46 21
If	12 9	12 2
Innovation	1 12	5 0
Nation/National	1 3	16 4
Need	16 15	26 4
Parent(s)	0 5	11 1
Percent(age)	18 0	0 0
Ready	8 6	0 0
School	70 8	59 16
Standard (s)	12 66	14 4
Student(s)	32 33	30 16
Teach/Teacher/Teaching	59 59	38 8
We/We’ve/We’re	67 47	98 45
You/Your/You’re/You’ve	11 37	63 4

Vita

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