

Malkin: Rotten to the Core - The Feds' Invasive Student Tracking Database

While many Americans worry about government drones in the sky spying on our private lives, Washington meddlers are already on the ground and in our schools gathering intimate data on children and families.

Say goodbye to your children's privacy. Say hello to an unprecedented nationwide student tracking system, whose data will apparently be sold by government officials to the highest bidders. It's yet another encroachment of centralized education bureaucrats on local control and parental rights under the banner of "Common Core."



As the American Principles Project, a conservative education think tank, reported last year, Common Core's technological project is "merely one part of a much broader plan by the federal government to track individuals from birth through their participation in the workforce." The 2009 porkulus package included a "State Fiscal Stabilization Fund" to bribe states into constructing "longitudinal data systems (LDS) to collect data on public-school students."

These systems will aggregate massive amounts of personal data -- health-care histories, income information, religious affiliations, voting status and even blood types and homework completion. The data will be available to a wide variety of public agencies. And despite federal student-privacy protections guaranteed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the Obama administration is paving the way for private entities to buy their way into the data boondoggle. Even more alarming, the U.S. Department of Education is encouraging a radical push from aggregate-level data-gathering to invasive individual student-level data collection.

At the South by Southwest education conference in Austin, Texas, this week, education technology gurus were salivating at the prospects of information plunder. "This is going to be a huge win for us," Jeffrey Olen, a product manager at education software company CompassLearning, told Reuters. Cha-ching-ching-ching.

The company is already aggressively marketing curricular material "aligned" to fuzzy, dumbed-down Common Core math and reading guidelines (which more than a dozen states are now revolting against). Along with two dozen other tech firms, CompassLearning sees even greater financial opportunities to mine Common Core student tracking systems. The centralized database is a strange-bedfellows alliance between the liberal Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (which largely underwrote and promoted the Common Core curricular scheme) and a division of conservative Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. (which built the database infrastructure).

Another nonprofit startup, "inBloom, Inc.," has evolved out of that partnership to operate the database. The Gates Foundation and other partners provided \$100 million in seed money. Reuters reports that inBloom, Inc. will "likely start to charge fees in 2015" to states and school districts participating in the system. "So far, seven states -- Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina and Massachusetts -- have committed to enter data from select school districts. Louisiana and New York will be entering nearly all

student records statewide."

The National Education Data Model, available online at <http://nces.sifinfo.org/datamodel/eiebrowser/techview.aspx?instance=studentElementarySecondary>, lists hundreds of data points considered indispensable to the nationalized student tracking racket. These include:

--"Bus Stop Arrival Time" and "Bus Stop Description."

--"Dwelling arrangement."

--"Diseases, Illnesses and Other Health Conditions."

--"Religious Affiliation."

--"Telephone Number Type" and "Telephone Status."

Home-schoolers and religious families that reject traditional government education would be tracked. Original NEDM data points included hair color, eye color, weight, blood types and even dental status.

How exactly does amassing and selling such personal data improve educational outcomes? It doesn't. This, at its core, is the central fraud of Washington's top-down nationalized curricular scheme. The Bill Gates-endorsed Common Core "standards" are a phony pretext for big-government expansion. The dazzling allure of "21st-century technology" masks the privacy-undermining agenda of nosy bureaucratic drones allergic to transparency, accountability and parental autonomy. Individual student privacy is sacrificed at the collective "For the Children" altar.

Fed Ed is not about excellence or academic achievement. It's about control, control and more control.

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