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HUFF
POST POLITICS

Gates Money and Common Core -- Part VI

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This post is the sixth (and final) post in a series I have written detailing Bill Gates' mammoth purchasing of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). (Here are links to the previous five posts in the series.)

In the fifth post, I mentioned that this final post would be Gates' CCSS funding of education businesses. Then, I realized I needed to account for the nonprofits not yet discussed. So, they, too, are represented here.

In this series, I wanted to present complete information from the Gates grants website. Therefore, the organizations listed in this final post of the series include all recipients of Gates CCSS funding not included in previous posts.

In short, the organizations included in Parts One thru Six are a comprehensive listing of the \$173.5 million in Gates funding designated for CCSS as of October 4, 2013.

All organizations receiving Gates CCSS funding can be found here, with the exception of one grant to the Fordham Foundation, which can be found here.

The list copied below can be found in Word document form here: Gates Money for CCSS to Businesses and Nonprofits.

Gates CCSS Funding to Businesses and (As of Yet Unexamined) Nonprofits

Bill Gates has paid a total of \$51.5 million to the businesses and nonprofits on the list below. Most of these recipients agree to the simple directive of "implementing the Common Core State Standards":

Achievement Network \$3,452,501

America's Promise \$500,000

Battelle for Kids \$249,808

Benchmark Education Company, LLC \$25,000

BetterLesson, Inc. \$3,527,240

Center for Applied Linguistics \$249,396

Center for Curriculum Redesign, Inc. \$198,000

Center for Teaching Quality, Inc. \$645,307

Common Core, Inc. \$550,844

Common Ground Software, Inc. \$500,000

ConnectEDU, Inc. \$499,375

Council for a Strong America \$1,550,000

Creative Commons Corporation \$1,099,687

Cristo Rey Network \$556,006

Education Development Center, Inc. \$211,795

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, Inc. \$250,000

Filament Games, LLC \$25,000

Fund for Public Schools, Inc. \$1,815,810

JUMP Math \$698,587
iCivics, Inc. \$500,000
Khan Academy, Inc. \$5,544,028
Learning Forward \$999,795
LearnZillion, Inc. \$1,215,525
Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education, Inc. \$151,431
MetaMetrics, Inc. \$3,468,005
National Center for Family Literacy, Inc. \$236,796
National Math and Science Initiative, Inc. \$248,760
National Paideia Center \$659,788
New Teacher Center \$250,000
New Venture Fund \$578,000
New Visions for Public Schools, Inc. \$8,399,935
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children \$240,000
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence \$198,206
Reasoning Mind, Inc. \$742,996
Research in Action, Inc. \$1,309,409
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Inc. \$4,618,652
Scholastic, Inc. \$4,463,541
Six Red Marbles, LLC \$500,000
State Education Technology \$500,000
WestEd \$30,000

If I attempted to examine all grant details represented by this list, this post would never end. Therefore, I will discuss a few of the larger Gates payouts listed above.

BetterLesson, Inc.

Let me begin with BetterLesson, Inc. Proponents of CCSS are fond of repeating that CCSS is "not a curriculum." However, Gates, who desperately wishes to "implement" CCSS, is willing to pay for that curriculum in the name of "helping teachers transition" and "students master":

BetterLesson, Inc.

Date: October 2012

Purpose: **to support the development of courses, aligned to the Common Core State Standards, for the purposes of helping teacher's transition to common core and increasing their students' ability to master the content**

Amount: \$3,527,240 [Purpose emphasis added.]

The founder of BetterLesson, Alex Grodd, is a Teach for America (TFA) alum. So, here we have Gates paying a teaching temp to write CCSS lessons for those who view teaching as a career. No one need guess what "student mastery" means to a former TFAer. Score well on that be-all-end-all standardized test.

Let's try another one.

Achievement Network

Achievement Network has a signature reform board of directors, including hedge fund managers and education business "founders." Achievement Network received two CCSS Gates grants, the larger of which is detailed below:

Achievement Network

Date: November 2012

Purpose: to support implementation of the Common Core State Standards by building the capacity of school leaders and teachers to address the instructional shifts through interim assessments, coaching, network collaboration, and access to resources

Amount: \$3,002,252

Thus, Gates has paid an organization run by non-educators to aid educators in implementing CCSS.

Sensible, isn't it?

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Inc.

How about Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors? Yet another organization with a board of directors heavy on hedge fund managers and business owners. And what is their CCSS task from Gates?

It's a terrible sentence. (Bolded below).

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Inc.

Date: October 2011

Purpose: **to partner with other foundations to support a project fund supporting state-led efforts aligning higher education placement requirements with college readiness assessments developed through the Common Core assessment consortia**

Amount: \$4,618,652 [Purpose emphasis added.]

Translation: Rockefeller Philanthropy is to join with other organizations in helping states to take the higher ed entrance requirements and make them fit with the CCSS assessments.

Rockefeller and other groups are going to help the states to be "state-led."

New Visions for Public Schools, Inc.

Moving on to New Visions for Public Schools. In New York City, the public schools now "shop" for a bureaucracy to which to report in place of a district superintendent. New Visions for Public Schools is one such bureaucracy. These organizations now directing the public schools are euphemistically called school support organizations.

New Visions for New Schools is very CCSS friendly. Below are the details on the larger of the two Gates CCSS grants it received:

New Visions for Public Schools, Inc.

Date: November 2010

Purpose: to support the Common Core/Career and College initiative (C4) effort designed to improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness through key strategies

Amount: \$8,149,935

Gates paid New Visions for Public Schools to "improve student achievement" which, of course, means maxing those standardized test scores.

Perhaps Gates should have paid NYC Mayor Bloomberg to have his minions reasonably set the cutoff scores of New York's first CCSS assessment so as to not fail most of the students. It might have cost Bill some eight-figure dough since Bloomberg is apparently proud of his accomplishment.

One more: Khan Academy.

Khan Academy

Khan Academy's "team" includes a number of individuals formerly with McKinsey and Company, the consulting firm formerly employing CCSS "architect" David Coleman. McKinsey's interest is in gathering data. McKinsey is in deep with CCSS. Consider this excerpt by Mona McDermott of United Opt Out:

...McKinsey and Co., which is a global consulting firm. Their big thing is called "Big Data."... They believe that the data is the answer to all things right now, (and) as you can see they've got their fingerprints all over everything in the Common Core. For one thing, David Coleman was one of the architects of the Common Core. ... He created the Student Achievement Partners, which helped develop standards, (and he) was a former consultant for McKinsey. Lou Gerstner, who is the co-founder of Achieve, was the former director at McKinsey & Co., and Sir Michael Barber was a former consultant McKinsey (and) is now one of the CEOs at Pearson. Pearson partners with the PARCC Consortium for the assessments.

I wrote about Coleman, Student Achievement Partners, and Achieve in my first post of this series. Gates generously funded both Student Achievement Partners and Achieve for this CCSS propagation. And here we have him funding Khan Academy- a foothold of McKinsey and Company:

Khan Academy

Date: October 2010

Purpose: to provide general operating support, expanding Khan Academy's leadership and staff capacity to map Khan Academy content to the Common Core high school standards, improve assessments, and enhance the user interface

Amount: \$1,464,667

Date: July 2011

Purpose: to develop the remaining K-12 math exercises to ensure full coverage of the Common Core math standards and form a small team to implement a blended learning model

Amount: \$4,079,361

Gates is paying Khan Academy to create CCSS curriculum. To do so, Khan Academy needed to expand its staff. So, Gates paid for that. Its team now includes 47 (mostly young) people, 6 of whom are formerly of McKinsey. And in signature reformer fashion, many of the young people held titles from their former employment meant to impress: vice president, lead designer, program manager, business manager, director.

Only one out of 47 mentions a substantive career (15 years) in classroom teaching.

Enough, already.

Gates: Spending Billions But Just "Not Sure"

Bill Gates has already spent billions on education reform. (I was tempted to write "countless billions," but that is not true. One is able to tabulate an up-to-date grand total using the Gates grants search engine. I invite anyone ambitious enough to take on this task to do so.) He has spent a documented \$173.5 million on CCSS alone- a bucket drop to the \$5 billion he spent up to 2011.

One would think that a seasoned businessman like Gates would be sure of his investment before wielding his checkbook (and disrupting countless lives in the process).

Not so.

Oh, Bill likes to promote the message that he bases his spending decisions on research:

"I believe in innovation and that the way you get innovation is you fund research and you learn the basic facts."
Straight from the Gates' mouth.

Yet Bill is fickle. He is now saying,

"It would be great if our education stuff worked, but that we won't know for a decade."
My livelihood has been reduced to Bill Gates' "stuff."

I have a word for Gates and his philanthropic ilk:

Step off.

I also have a word for my beleaguered teaching colleagues across the nation:

Hang in.

Don't Give Up

My desire is that the information I have presented in this series (and elsewhere on my blog) might be used as ammunition in the hands of those oppressed by the likes of Gates and his reform purchasing power. Contact your legislators. Attend those school board meeting equipped with information about the driving forces behind CCSS and other detrimental so-called reforms. Speak out, and when you are ignored, speak again.

Let's wear 'em down with the truth.

Dignity. Always dignity.

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