

A MOVIE ABOUT THE COMMON CORE

BUILDING THE MACHINE

————— WATCH THE FILM. BE INVOLVED. —————

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What works in the American education system, and what is broken?
2. Mike Petrilli and James Milgram argue that the Common Core State Standards are better than most state-level educational standards. Yet, Milgram gives caution that the Common Core may also weaken college-level coursework.
 - What are some good aspects of the Common Core?
 - How should the Common Core be viewed in light of Milgram's explanation of remedial courses?
 - Would the Common Core be good for colleges?
 - Is the Common Core trying to fix anything that does not need fixing?
3. Dr. Sandra Stotsky says that self-governing is one of the "huge and powerful idea[s]" of the American model. The expert and the common citizen each play an integral part in society.
 - What role should the general public play in deciding educational philosophy and practice?
 - In public decision-making, what does a good balance look like between expert opinion and public opinion?
4. How does a parent's role in his or her child's education differ from that of a teacher's?



5. *Building the Machine* points out many critiques of the Common Core. However, are the Common Core standards the real problem, or is the reasoning behind the standards the problem (e.g., systemization and standardization)? Is it both? Is it neither?
 6. What are some flaws and benefits of standardized education?
 7. Toward the end of the documentary, Wayne Brasler describes the Common Core’s approach to children’s education, saying, “[Children are] not apples. They’re people.” Is he oversimplifying the Common Core philosophy, or is this a good analogy?
 8. Ze’ev Wurman cites career and college readiness as an “untenable” goal of the Common Core. Is it realistic to expect a politically viable reform that is academic enough for college-seeking students and general enough for non-college-seeking students?
 9. Dr. Jim Stergios discusses the idea of “cross-state collaborations.” These are partnerships between states that provide similarity in curriculum. This helps out-of-state students transfer into a new state with fewer difficulties and adjustments. Are there ways to utilize “cross-state collaborations” without resorting to the federal government?
 10. Are there ways to personalize education for each child in a classroom with a high teacher/student ratio?
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COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

11. What are some educational problems or difficulties in our own schools?
12. What are some specific, practical steps that we can take to address these issues?