

# Be An Angel



## Help A Child Experience A Wonderful Christmas

There are some Borderland Children, who like any other children, are dreaming of a special Christmas ~ a toy, supplies or nice clothing under the tree. But because of crisis, burden or illness, this is very difficult for their families to fulfill. You can make it a wonderful Christmas for our community's less fortunate and show them that some dreams really can come true.



### THE ANGEL TREE

November 18<sup>th</sup>-  
December 13<sup>th</sup>

1. Visit K-Mart or Menards and select a name tag (or tags) from out Angel Tree of community children.
2. In the book of Angels, fill in your name & phone number next to the number from the tag (or tags) you have chosen.
3. Select your gift(s) at any business of your choosing.\*
4. Highlight or check off the item(s) you have purchased. Attach the numbered tag(s) to your wrapped gift(s) and return them by December 16<sup>th</sup> to the Salvation Army Center, 1301 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue W, located across from Dairy Queen on Hwy 53. If you have multiple packages for one tag please be sure to bag or tie them together. Affix your tag(s) securely, as this is the only way to match children to their gifts.

## Thank You For Your Generosity It Is Truly Appreciated!

### Sponsored By:



Salvation Army Office Hours  
Monday – Thursday 10 am - 12 pm & 1pm - 4 pm.  
If you are unable to drop off gifts during office hours  
please call 283-3394 to make other arrangements.

# EDUCATION

## STRAIGHT 'A'S

The Journal welcomes ideas for stories about students from and in our community.  
**Call the Journal at 285-7411**

## Uncovering the Common Core

Separate the Common Core from the money, from the tests, from the politics, from biased textbooks and lesson plans. When the national standards stand independently from federal control and when you consider the developers and goals of the Common Core, you may find yourself in support.

Attending the 2013 MSNBC's Education Nation in New York shifted me from "unconvinced" to partial supporter of the Common Core. It is an honor to be one of the few rural educators to have sat with the architects of educational policy, and parents are usually left out of the conversation completely. As an educator at Indus School, I do not think this is right; after all, this is not only my ninth year serving parents by teaching their children, but I also am invested as a parent. The difference is that I have been given the opportunity to have a voice. When you speak directly to the minds behind the national standards there is a lot to respect.

I do not, however, support the massive data collection mandated by the Department of Education. Nor am I convinced that we can test critical thinking with standardized tests. I certainly do not believe that the Federal Department of Education trumps local, parental authority over education. But I agree with Ronald Thorpe, president of National Board Certification, when he said that if we separate the Common Core from the high stakes testing, it is good for education. I can only speak from the classroom as an English educator on the quality of the standards themselves. And in literacy, they are good.

The first thing to understand is that the Common Core literacy standards (the only part Minnesota has adopted) are rooted in sound education. It is a red herring to say that the Common Core is solely political. While I have no interaction with the other organizations behind the Core, I do have eight graduate credits in College Board classes in AP Literature and Language. They have been a major player behind the Core and their work is solid.

The College Board has been raising standards on their own with Advanced Placement courses, so when Minnesota adopted the Core standards in Language Arts and Literacy, they essentially



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**VIVA teachers attending MSNBC's Teacher Townhall and Common Core workshops were, from the left, Kim Bolton, Chicago, Ill., Glenn Morehouse-Olson, St. Francis, Wade Sutton, International Falls, Mark Anderson, New York, N.Y., Katie Morosky, Newtown, Conn., and Freeda Pirillis, Chicago.**

integrated the skills necessary to compete at university. Performance is low in America and the Common Core provides a framework to shift this by returning to where standards ought to have been for years.

The Common Core does not reduce the study of classic literature as is popularly understood. It does spread out the teaching of reading into other disciplines from science and history to art and math. This asks educators to work together and streamlines our students' experience. It also allows for more time in English for literature since the responsibilities for literacy are spread throughout the day.

The Common Core requires the ability to analyze, not adopt a point of view dictated by a teacher or a textbook. As David Coleman, president and CEO of the College Board told us, the literacy standards are about being able to ask a "really good question" and educators are "artisan(s) of questions." Can students read something and know what the author is saying and evaluate what they are using as evidence? We all need to be able to do that. If the article is about cutting jobs, we want our kids to discern the reasons. Then they can take their own position and defend it. If the story exemplifies social supports provided by government, should they not be able to uncover the presuppositions the author holds? If the writer is pushing for restoring downtown buildings should we not have the skills to judge the effects? The Common Core is not about agreeing with the textbook; it is about building the ability to understand and create independent opinion

through doubt. We should judge our students as Voltaire suggests, "by his questions, not by his answers." The Common Core in the classroom allows me to do exactly this.

The Common Core is about raising the standards so there is a drift upward of ability and academic maturity. If we as parents planned our children's education backward from grade 16 (college graduation) we would see a different picture. This is what Common Core strives to do. We don't just want our kids to attend university, we want them to find the job in which they will thrive. We want them to graduate. Common Core takes this as the endgame and asks educators to teach the thinking skills necessary beginning in Kindergarten through grade 12. Our picture of education is more full and purposeful.

Common Core is not about individual lessons. The Common Core itself is not about politics or money or federal overreach. Most of the criticism has rested there: a lesson plan that is obviously biased or confusing for the students or the unconstitutionality of the Federal Department of Education. However, there is a different problem there other than Common Core. This has to do with inadequate teacher training, the fact that education has not evolved into a true profession and an old-guard philosophy controlling our school policies. When I separate myself from the politics and money surrounding it, I can at least support the Common Core literacy standards themselves. Minnesota has adopted something good. New York taught me that they are professional and hold up to scrutiny.

## BIRTHDAY BOOKSHELF CLUB



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**Members of Falls Elementary School October Birthday Bookshelf Club include, from left, Kaylee Scholler, Brendyn Scholler, Autumn Davenport, Alyssa Black and Avery Hogan.**

\*Monetary donations are gratefully accepted, payable to: The Salvation Army, P.O. Box 592, Int'l Falls, MN 56649.