

Testimony of Julie Aikins
March 21, 2013
House Education Committee
House Bill 2289-Common Core Standards

I have taught at Royster Middle School here in Chanute, Kansas, for 31 years. Kansas and KSDE took a leadership role early when they convened practicing teachers to review the drafts of the College and Career Ready CCSS documents. I served on the KSDE teacher committee who reviewed and helped make changes to draft versions of the Common Core standards document before it was published for public comment. I also made comments on the document during the public comment period, along with thousands of other citizens, parents, educators and others. I was excited when the Kansas Board of Education officially adopted these new standards in October, 2010.

I am a longtime teacher. I had PREVIOUSLY served on standards committees during the previous 15 years in Kansas, when KSDE wrote its own standards and assessments. They were good standards, but the CCSS are better. In the two years since Kansas officially adopted the CCSS, I have been so excited to see more rigorous learning and deeper thinking going on in my own classroom.

Since 46 other states have adopted CCSS, I have found a common understanding and common language with shared goals and purpose with colleagues from other states. We share resources and teaching ideas that make ALL of us better teachers, thus benefitting ALL our students.

The Smarter Balanced assessment consortium that is contracting with Kansas and other states to write new assessments has also produced some preview questions that promise to challenge our students to achieve at even higher levels. Further, Kansas is well-represented in the subcommittees working directly with the Smarter Balanced Consortium. Once again, Kansas has taken a leadership role.

It saddens me that there seems to be so much misinformation, misunderstanding and misguided opinions out there about the Common Core standards. I have taught with state-produced standards and assessments. I have taught for the past two years implementing Common Core standards. Why, in today's woeful economic times, would ANY parent, teacher, business person, legislator or citizen want Kansas to dismantle the excellent standards that the state board of education put in place after a public comment period and replace those excellent standards which Kansas teachers helped refine and implement standards and assessments that the state would create at ENORMOUS taxpayer expense? How can any taxpayer not understand that the cost of implementing CCSS is offset through sharing information among the other 46 states who have also adopted them, which is a wiser way to invest tax dollars than the enormous expense of writing new standards and assessments? Finally, why would any parent or citizen object to Kansas students performing and achieving at more rigorous levels than ever before? Kansas has long been a national leader in education, always with the best interests of the students first and foremost in mind. Common Core state standards will pave the way for Kansas students to competently, confidently, and skillfully become the workers, leaders and citizens of their future, and ours.

As a parent, educator and taxpayer, Ms. Kelley, I urge the House Education committee to reject HB 2289. Over 460,000 Kansas students deserve the quality education that CCSS can provide.

Thank you for your time.

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