

Dear Representative Kasha and House Education Committee Members,
I am writing in opposition of HB 2289: Prohibiting the Use of Common Core Standards.

I served as Co-Vice Chair of the Committee formed by the Kansas State Department of Education to review drafts of the English Language Arts Common Core standards in 2009-10. I spoke to the Board of Education in favor of their adoption in October of 2010. These standards are good for Kansas students. Unlike the "No Child Left Behind Standards", these standards allow all children the opportunity to achieve at high levels. These standards promote the authentic comprehension, writing, listening/speaking, and language usage skills that every parent and grandparent wishes their child or grandchild to achieve. Unlike the "No Child Left Behind Standards", these standards encourage reading closely, writing about what has been read, and voicing opinions with reference to factual knowledge- all in coherent fashion. They are not "choose A, B, C, or D", multiple choice tasks. They require teachers to assign and lead children in tasks that encourage "reading, writing, and thinking."

The standards were a "state-led" initiative, beginning at the National Governor's Conference. They are not national standards. Many changes to the standards drafts, proposed by our Kansas committee, appeared in revisions and the final Common Core Standards document. These standards do reflect what educators know Kansas students, and students across the United States, need to be successful in the 21st century. Kansas had the option of "adding 15%" of our own standards to this document. The committee in 2010 did this. This 15% could be worked with - modified/revised- rather than prohibiting the use of the Common Core standards. This would be a better option than prohibiting the use of these standards.

Kansas will have the opportunity to "choose" our assessment. Adoption of the standards does not tie us to an assessment.

I presently have grandchildren in the Kansas school system and, as a Literacy Coach in the Royal Valley school district, I work with a great number of students. Kansas students deserve these standards. They deserve to be prepared for a job in the 21st century. We, as teachers, are preparing students for a great number of jobs that don't even exist today. Students need basic skills, as in "No Child Left Behind", but they also need to become "thinkers." There are many problems to be solved, let the schools develop students who "think." It is our only hope for the future! Thank you for reading this and please consider voting against the prohibition of using the Common Core standards.

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Sandra Morris

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